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THE BOND MAN.



THE BOND MAN.

A NEW SAGA.

BY HALL CAINE,

AUTHOR OF "THE DEEMSTER."

"Vengeance is Mine—I will repay."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.—THE BOOK OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS.

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WILLIAM HEINEMANN.

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THE
BOOK OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS.

CHAPTER I.

RED JASON.

Now the facts of this history must stride on some four years, and come to a great crisis in the lives of Greeba and Jason. Every event of that time seemed to draw these two together, and the first of the circumstances that bound them came very close on the death of Stephen Orry. Only a few minutes after Greeba, at the bidding of her two brothers, had left Jason alone with the dying man, she had parted from them without word or warning, and fled back to the little hut in Port-y-Vullin. With a wild labouring of heart, panting for breath and full of dread, she had burst the door open,

fearing to see what she dare not think of; but instead of the evil work she looked for, she had found Jason on his knees by the bedside, sobbing as if his heart would break, and Stephen Orry passing away, with a tender light in his eyes and a word of blessing on his lips. At that sight she had stood on the threshold like one who is transfixed, and how long that moment had lasted she never knew. But the thing she remembered next was that Jason had taken her by the hand and drawn her up, with all the fire of her spirit gone, to where the man lay dead before them, and had made her swear to him there and then never to speak of what she had seen, and to put away from her mind for ever the vague things she had but partly guessed. After that he had told her, with a world of pain, that Stephen Orry had been his father; that his father had killed his mother by base neglect and cruelty; that to wipe out his mother's wrongs he had vowed to slay his father; and that his father, not knowing him, save in the vision of his delirium, had died in the act of blessing him. Greeba

had yielded to Jason because she had been conquered by his stronger will, and was in fear of the passion which flashed in his face; but hearing all this, she remembered Michael Sunlocks, and how he must stand as the son of the other woman; and straightway she found her own reasons why she should be silent on all that she had that night seen and heard. This secret was the first of the bonds between them; and the second, though less obvious, was even more real.

Losing no time, Adam Fairbrother had written a letter to Michael Sunlocks, by that name, telling him of the death of his father, and how, so far as the facts were known, the poor man came by it in making the port in his boat after seeing his son away in the brig. This he had despatched to the only care known to him, that of the Lord Bishop John Petersen, at his Latin school of Reykjavík; but after a time the letter had come back, with a note from the Bishop saying that no such name was known to him, and no such student was under his charge. Much afraid that the same storm that had led Stephen

Orry to his end had overtaken Michael Sunlocks also, Adam Fairbrother had then promptly readdressed his letter to the care of the Governor-General, who was also the Postmaster, and added a postscript asking if, after the sad event whereof he had thought it his task in love and duty to apprise him, there was the same necessity that his dear boy should remain in Iceland. "But indite me a few lines without delay," he wrote, "giving me assurance of your safe arrival, for what has happened of late days has haunted me with many fears of mishap."

Then in due course an answer had come from Michael Sunlocks, saying he had landed safely, but there being no regular mails, he had been compelled to await the sailing of English ships to carry his letters; that by some error he had missed the first of these, and was now writing by the next; that many strange things had happened to him, and he was lodged in the house of the Governor-General; that his father's death had touched him very deeply, being brought about by a mischance that so nearly affected himself; that the sad fact, so far from leav-

ing him free to return home, seemed to make it the more necessary that he should remain where he was until he had done what he had been sent to do ; and, finally, that what that work was he could not tell in a letter, but only by word of mouth, whenever it pleased God that they should meet again. This, with many words of affection for Adam himself, in thanks for his fatherly anxiety, and some mention of Greeba in tender but guarded terms, was the sum of the only letter that had come from Michael Sunlocks in the four years after Stephen Orry's death to the first of the events that are now to be recorded.

And throughout these years Jason had lived at Lague, having been accepted as housemate by the six Fairbrothers, when the ship-broken men had gone their own ways on receiving from their Dublin owners the wages that were due to them. Though his relation to Stephen Orry had never become known, it had leaked out that he had come into Orry's money. He had done little work. His chief characteristics had been love of liberty and laziness. In the

summer he had fished on the sea and in the rivers, and he had shot and hunted in the winter. He had followed these pursuits out of sheer love of an idle life; but if he had a hobby, it was the collecting of birds. Of every species on the island, of land or sea-fowl, he had found a specimen. He stuffed his birds with some skill, and kept them in the little hut in Port-y-Vullin.

The four years had developed his superb physique, and he had grown to be a yet more magnificent creature than Stephen Orry himself. He was rounder, though his youth might have pardoned more angularity; broader, and more upright, with a proud poise of head, long wavy red hair, smooth cheeks, solid white teeth, face of broad lines, an intelligent expression, and a deep voice that made the mountains ring. His dress suited well his face and figure. He wore a skin cap with a peak, a red woollen shirt belted about the waist, breeches of leather, leggings and seaman's boots. The cap was often awry, and a tuft of red hair tumbled over his bronzed forehead; his shirt was torn, his breeches were stained,

and his leggings tied with rope ; but rough and even ragged as his dress was, it sat upon him with a fine rude grace. With a knife in his sheath, a net or a decoy over his arm, a pouch for powder slung behind him, a fowling-piece across his shoulder, and a dog at his heels, he would go away into the mountains as the evening fell. In summer he would lie the night long among the gorse, stretched out to wait or watch, looking up at the stars, listening to the dogs at the farms below, and making the mountains echo with his shot when his chance came. And in the early sunrise he would stride down again and into the "Hibernian," scenting up the old tavern with tobacco smoke, and carrying many dead birds at his belt, with the blood still dripping from their heads hung down. Folks called him Red Jason, or sometimes Jason the Red.

He began to visit Government House. Greeba was there, but at first he seemed not to see her. Simple greetings he exchanged with her, and that was all the commerce between them. With the Governor,

when work was over, he sat and smoked, telling of his own country and its laws, and the ways of its people, talking of his hunting and fishing, and calling the mountains jökulls, and the Tynwald the Löberg, and giving names of his own to the glens, the Chasm of Ravens for the Dhoon, and Broad Shield for Ballaglass. And Adam loved to learn how close was the bond between his own dear isle and the land of the great sea-kings of old time, but most of all he listened to what Jason said, that he might thereby know what kind of world it was wherein his dear boy Michael Sunlocks had to live away from him.

“A fine lad,” Adam Fairbrother would say to Greeba; “a lad of fearless courage, and unflinching contempt of death, with a great horror of lying and treachery, and an inborn sense of justice. Not tender and gentle with his strength, as my own dear Sunlocks is, but of a high and serious nature, and having passions that may not be trifled with.” And hearing this, and the more deliberate warning of her brothers at Lague, Greeba would remember that she had her-

self the best reason to know that the passions of Jason could be terrible.

But nothing she recked of it all, for her heart was as light as her manners in those days, and if she thought twice of her relations with Jason, she remembered that she was the daughter of the Governor, and he was only a poor sailor lad who had been wrecked off their coast.

Jason was a great favourite with Mrs. Fairbrother, notwithstanding that he did no work. Rumour had magnified the fortune that Stephen Orry had left him, and the two hundred pounds stood at two thousand in her eyes. With a woman's quick instinct she saw how Jason stood towards Greeba, almost before he had himself become conscious of it, and she smiled on him and favoured him. A whisper of this found its way from Lague to Government House, and old Adam shook his head. He had nothing against Jason, except that the lad was not fond of work, and whether Jason was poor or rich counted for very little, but he could not forget his boy Sunlocks.

Thus while Greeba remained with her

father there was but little chance that she could wrong the promise she had made to Michael; but events seemed to force her into the arms of Jason. Her mother had never been of an unselfish spirit, and since parting from her husband she had shown a mean penuriousness. This affected her six sons chiefly, and they realised that when she had taken their side against their father she had taken the cream of their living also. Lague was now hers for her lifetime, and only theirs after she was done with it; and if they asked much more for their work than bed and board, she reminded them of this, and bade them wait. Soon tiring of their Lenten entertainment, they trooped off, one after one, to their father, badly as they had dealt by him, and complained loudly of the great wrong he had done them when he made over the lands of Lague to their mother. What were they now, though sons of the Governor? No better than hinds on their mother's farm, expected to work for her from light to dusk, and getting nothing for their labour but the house she kept over their heads. Grown men they all were now,

and the elder of them close on their prime, yet none were free to marry, for none had the right to a penny for the living he earned; and all this came of their father's unwise generosity.

Old Adam could not gainsay them, and he would not reproach them, so he did all that remained to him to do, and that was to exercise a little more of the same unwise generosity, and give them money. And finding this easy means of getting what they wanted, they came again and again, all six of them, from Asher to Gentleman Johnny, and as often as they came they went away satisfied, though old Adam shook his head when he saw how mean and small was the spirit of his sons. Greeba also shook her head, but from another cause, for though she grudged her brothers nothing, she knew that her father was fast being impoverished. Once she hinted as much, but old Adam made light of her misgivings, saying that if the worst came to the worst he had still his salary, and what was the good of his money if he might not use it, and what was the virtue of charity if it must not begin at home?

But the evil was not ended there, for the six lumbering men who objected to work without pay were nothing loth to take pay without work. Not long after the first of the visits to Government House, Lague began to be neglected. Asher lay in the ingle and dozed; Thurstan lay about in the "Hibernian" and drank; Ross and Stean started a ring of game-cocks, Jacob formed a nest of private savings, and John developed his taste for dress and his appetite for galantries. Mrs. Fairbrother soon discovered the source of the mischief, and railed at the name of her husband, who was ruining her boys and bringing herself to beggary.

Thus far had matters gone, during the four years following the death of Stephen Orry, and then a succession of untoward circumstances hastened a climax of grave consequence to all the persons concerned in this history. Two bad seasons had come, one on the end of the other. The herring fishing had failed, and the potato crop had suffered a blight. The fisher folk and the poor farming people were reduced to sore straits. The one class had to throw the

meal bag across their shoulders and go round the houses begging, and the other class had to compound with their landlords or borrow from their neighbours.

Where few were rich and many were poor, the places of call for either class were not numerous. But two houses at least were always open to those who were in want—Lague and Government House; though their welcome at the one was very unlike their welcome at the other. Mrs. Fairbrother relieved their necessities by lending them money on mortgage on their lands or boats, and her interest was high in proportion to their necessities. They had no choice but accept her terms, however rigid, and if in due course they could not meet them they had no resource but to yield up to her their little belongings. In less than half a year boat after boat, croft after croft, and even farm after farm, had fallen into her hands. She grew rich, and the richer she grew the more penurious she became. There were no banks in the north of the island then, and the mistress of Lague was in effect the farmers' banker.

Government House, in the south of the island, had yet more applicants; but what the Governor had he gave, and when his money was gone he served out orders on the millers for meal and the weavers for cloth. It soon became known that he kept open house to the poor, and from north and south, east and west, the needy came to him in troops, and with them came the idle and the dissolute. He knew the one class from the other, yet railed at both in threatening words, reproaching their improvidence, and predicting his own ruin, but he ended by giving to all alike. They found out his quarter-day and came in throngs to meet it, knowing that, bluster as he would, while the good man had money he was sure to give it to all who asked. The sorry troop, good and bad, worthy and unworthy, soon left him without a pound. He fumed at this when Greeba cast up his reckoning, but comforted himself with the thought that he had still his stipend of five hundred pounds a year coming in to him, however deeply it might be condemned beforehand.

“And^e after all,” he said, “we are but

banking in the other world, Greeba, and it's a good hand that tells the reckoning there."

At the first pinch of his necessity his footman deserted him, and after the footman went the groom.

"They say the wind is tempered to the shorn sheep, Greeba," said he, and laughed.

He had always stood somewhat in awe of these great persons, and his spirits rose visibly at the loss of them, for he had never yet reconciled himself to the dignity of his state.

"It's wonderful how much a man may do for himself when he's put to it," he said, as he groomed his own horse next morning. His sons were not so easily appeased, and muttered hard words at his folly, for their own supplies had by this time suffered curtailment. He was ruining himself at a break-neck pace, and if he came to die in the gutter, who should say that it had not served him right? The man who threw away his substance with his eyes open deserved to know by bitter proof that it had gone. Jason heard all this at the fireside at Lague, and though he could not answer

it, he felt his palms itch sorely, and his fists tighten like ribs of steel, and his whole body stiffen up and silently measure its weight against that of Thurstan Fairbrother, the biggest and heaviest and hardest spoken of the brothers. Greeba heard it too, but took it with a gay lightsomeness, knowing all, yet fearing nothing.

“What matter?” she said, and laughed.

But strange and silly enough were some of the shifts that her father’s openhandedness put her to in these bad days of the bitter need of the island’s poor people.

It was the winter season, when things were at their worst, and on Christmas Eve Greeba had a goose killed for their Christmas dinner. The bird was hung in one of the outhouses, to drain and cool before being plucked, and while it was there Greeba went out, leaving her father at home. Then came three of the many who had never yet been turned empty from the Governor’s door. Adam blustered at all of them, but he emptied his pockets to one, gave the goose to another, and smuggled something out of the pantry for the third.

The goose was missed by the maid whose work it was to pluck it, and its disappearance was made known to Greeba on her return. Guessing at the way it had gone, she went into the room where her father sat placidly smoking, and trying to look wondrous serene and innocent.

“What do you think, father?” she said, “some one has stolen the goose.”

“I’m afraid, my dear,” he answered meekly, “I gave it away to poor Kinrade, the parish clerk. Would you believe it, he and his good old wife hadn’t a bite or a sup for their Christmas dinner?”

“Well,” said Greeba, “you’ll have to be content with bread and cheese for your own, for we have nothing else in the house now.”

“I’m afraid, my dear,” he stammered, “I gave away the cheese too. Poor daft Gelling, who lives on the mountains, had nothing to eat but a loaf of bread, poor fellow.”

Now the rapid impoverishment of the Governor was forcing Greeba into the arms of Jason, though they had yet no idea that this was so; and when the crisis came that loosened the ties which held Greeba to her

father, it came as a surprise to all three of them.

The one man in the island who had thus far shown a complete indifference to the sufferings of the poor in their hour of tribulation was the Bishop of Sodor and Man. This person was a fashionable ecclesiastic—not a Manxman—a Murray, and a near kinsman of the Lord of the Island, who had kept the see four years vacant that the sole place of profit in the island might thereby be retained for his own family. Many years the Bishop had drawn his stipend, tithe and glebe rents, which were very large in proportion to the diocese, and almost equal in amount to the emoluments of the whole body of the native clergy. He held small commerce with his people, and the bad seasons troubled him little until he felt the pinch of them himself. But when he found it hard to gather his tithe, he began to realise that the island was passing through sore straits. Then he sold his tithe charges by auction in England, and they were knocked down to a Scotch factor,—a hard man, untroubled by sentiment, and not too proud to

get his own by means that might be thought to soil the cloth of a Bishop.

When news of this transfer reached the island the Manx clergy looked black, though they dared say nothing; but the poor people grumbled audibly, for they knew what was coming. It soon came, in the shape of writs from the Bishop's seneschal, served by the Bishop's sumner. Then the cry of the poor reached the Governor at Castletown. No powers had he to stay the seizure of goods and stock for arrears that were forfeit to the Church Courts, but he wrote to the Bishop, asking him to stay execution at such a moment of the island's necessity. The Bishop answered him curtly that the matter was now outside his control. At that the Governor inquired into the legality of the sale, and found good reason to question it. He wrote again to the Bishop, hinting his doubts, and then the Bishop told him to mind his own business. "My business is the welfare of the people," the Governor answered, "and be you Bishop or Lord, or both, be sure that while I am here I will see to it."

“Such is the penalty of setting a beggar on horseback,” the Bishop rejoined.

Meantime the Scotch factor went on with his work, and notices were served that if arrears of tithe rent were not paid by a given date, cattle or crop to the value of them would then be seized in the Bishop's name. When the word came to Government House, the Governor announced to Greeba his intention to be present at the first seizure. She tried to restrain him, fearing trouble; but he was fully resolved. Then she sent word by old Chalse A'Killey to her brothers at Lague, begging them to go with their father and see him through, but one and all refused. There was mischief brewing; and if the Governor had a right to interfere, he had a right to have the civil forces at the back of him. If he had no right to the help of Castle Rushen, he had no right to stop the execution. In any case they had no wish to meddle.

When old Chalse brought back this answer, Red Jason chanced to be at Castletown. He had been at Government House oftener than usual since the clouds had begun

to hang on it. Coming down from the mountains, with his pipe in his mouth, his fowling-piece over his shoulder, and his birds hanging from his belt, he would sometimes contrive to get up into the yard at the back, fling down a brace of game on to the kitchen floor, and go off again without speaking to any one. Greeba had been too smart for him this time, and he was standing before her with a look of guilt when Chalse came up on his errand. Then Jason heard all, and straightway offered to go with the Governor, and never let wit of his intention.

“Oh, thank you, thank you!” said Greeba, and she looked up into his bronzed face and smiled proudly, and her long lashes blinked over her beautiful eyes. Her glance seemed to go through him. It seemed to go through all nature, and fill the whole world with a new, glad light.

The evil day came, and the Governor was as good as his word. He went away to Peel, where the first seizure was to be made. There a big crowd had already gathered, and at sight of Adam’s face a great shout went up. The factor heard it, as he came

on from Bishop's Court with a troop of his people about him. "I'll mak' short shift of a' that the noo," he said. When he came up he ordered that a cow-house door should be opened and the cattle brought out for instant sale, for he had an auctioneer by his side. But the door was found to be locked, and he shouted to his men to leap on to the roof and strip off the thatch. Then the Governor cried "Stop!" and called on the factor to desist, for though he might seize the cattle there would be no sale that day, since no man there present would take the bread out of the mouths of the poor.

"Then they shall try the milk," said the factor, with a hoarse laugh, and at the same moment the Bishop's seneschal, a briefless advocate, stepped out, pushed his hot face into Adam's, and said that, Governor as he was, if he encouraged the people to resist, the sumner should there and then summon him to appear before the Church Courts for contempt.

At that insult the crowd surged around, muttering deep oaths, and factor and seneschal were both much hustled. In another

moment there was a general struggle ; people were shouting, the Governor was on the ground and in danger of being trodden under foot, the factor had drawn a pistol, and some of his men were flourishing hangers.

By this time Red Jason had lounged up, as if by chance, to the outskirts of the crowd, and now he pushed through with great strides, lifted the Governor to his feet, laid the factor on the broad of his back, and clapped his pistol-hand under one heavy heel. Then the hangers flashed round Jason's face, and he stretched his arms and laid about him. In two minutes he had made a wide circle where he stood, and in two minutes more the factor and his men, with seneschal, sumner, auctioneer, and all the riff-raff of the Church Courts, were going off up the road with best foot foremost, and a troop of the people, like a pack of hounds at full cry, behind.

Then the remnant of the crowd compared notes and bruises.

"Man alive, what a boy to fight," said one.

"Who was it?" said another.

"Och, Jason the Red, of coorse," said a third.

Jason was the only man badly injured. He had a deep cut over the right brow, and though the wound bled freely he made light of it. But Adam was much troubled at the sight.

"I much misdoubt me but we'll rue the day," he said.

Jason laughed at that, and they went back to Castletown together. Greeba saw them coming, and all but fainted at the white bandage that gleamed across Jason's forehead; but he bade her have no fear, for his wound was nothing. Nevertheless she must needs dress it afresh, though her deft fingers trembled woefully, and seeing how near the steel had come to the eye all her heart was in her mouth. But he only laughed at the bad gash, and thought with what cheer he would take such another just to have the same tender hands bathe it and stitch it, and to see the troubled heaving of the round bosom that was before him while his head was held down.

"Aren't you very proud of yourself, Jason?" she whispered softly, as she finished.

"Why proud?" said he.

"It's the second time you have done as I have bidden you, and suffered for doing so," she said.

He knew not what reply to make, scarcely realising which way her question tended. So feeling very stupid, he said again—

"But why proud?"

"Aren't you, then?" she said. "Because *I* am proud of you."

They were alone, and he saw her breast heave and her great eyes gleam, and he felt dizzy. At the next instant their hands touched, and then his blood boiled, and before he knew what he was doing he had clasped the beautiful girl in his arms, and kissed her on the lips and cheek. She sprang away from him, blushing deeply, but he knew that she was not angry, for she smiled through her deep rich colour, as she fled out of the room on tiptoe. From that hour he troubled his soul no more with fears that he was unworthy of Greeba's love, for he looked at his wound in the glass, and remembered her words, and laughed in his heart.

The Governor was right that there would

be no sale for arrears of tithe charges. After a scene at Bishop's Court the factor went back to England, and no more was heard of the writs served by the sumner. But wise folks predicted a storm for Adam Fairbrother, and the great people were agreed that his conduct had been the maddest folly.

"He'll have to take the horns with the hide," said Deemster Lace.

"He's a fool that doesn't know which side his bread is buttered," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

The storm came quickly, but not from the quarter expected.

Since the father of the Duke of Athol had sold his fiscal rights to the English Crown, the son had rued the bargain. All the interest in the island that remained to him lay in his title, his patronage of the Bishopric, and his Governor-Generalship. His title counted for little, for it was unknown at the English Court, and the salary of his Governor-Generalship counted for less, for, not being resident in the island, he had to pay a local Governor. The patronage of the Bishopric was the one tangible item of his interest, and when the profits of that office were imperilled

he determined to part with his truncated honours. Straightway he sold them to the Crown, for nearly six times as much as his father had got for the insular revenues. When this neat act of truck and trade was complete he needed his deputy no more, and sent Adam Fairbrother an instant warning, with half-a-year's salary for smart money.

The blow came with a shock on Greeba and her father, but there was no leisure to sigh over it. Government House and its furniture belonged to the Government, and the new Governor might take possession of it at any moment. But the stock on its lands was Adam's, and, as it was necessary to dispose of it, he called a swift sale. Half the island came to it, and many a brave brag came then from many a vain stomach. Adam was rightly served! What was there to expect when jacks were set in office? With five hundred a year coming in for twenty years he was as poor as a church mouse! Aw, money in the hands of some men was like water in a sieve!

Adam's six sons were there, looking on with sneering lips, as much as to say, "Let

nobody blame us for a mess like this." Red Jason was there, too, glooming as black as a thundercloud, and itching to do battle with somebody if only a fit case would offer.

Adam himself did not show his face. He was ashamed—he was crushed—he was humiliated—but not for the reason attributed to him by common report. Alone he sat, and smoked and smoked, in the room at the back from whence he had seen Greeba and Michael Sunlocks that day when they walked side by side into the paved yard, and when he said within himself, "Now, God grant that this may be the end of all parting between them and me." He was thinking of that day now; that it was very, very far away. He heard the clatter of feet below, and the laughter of the bidders and the wondrous jests of the facetious auctioneer.

When the work was over, and the house felt quiet and so, so empty, Greeba came in to him, with eyes large and red, and kissed him without saying a word. Then he became mighty cheerful all at once, and bade her fetch out her account books, for they had their own reckoning yet to make,

and now was the time to make it. She did as she was bidden, and counted up her father's debts, with many a tear dropping over them as if trying to blot them out for ever. And meanwhile he counted up his half-year's smart money, and the pile of silver and gold that had come of the sale. When all was reckoned, they found they would be just fifteen pounds to the good, and that was now their whole fortune.

Next morning there came a great company of the poor, and stood in silence about the house. They knew that Adam had nothing to give, and they came for nothing ; they on their part had nothing to offer, and they had nothing to say ; but this was their way of showing sympathy with the good man in his dark hour.

The next morning after that old Adam said to Greeba—

“Come, girl, there is only one place in the island that we have a right to go to, and that's Lague. Let's away.”

And towards Lague they set their faces, afoot, all but empty-handed, and with no one but crazy old Chalse A'Killey for company.

CHAPTER II.

HOW GREEBA WAS LEFT WITH JASON.

IT was early summer, and the day was hot ; there had been three weeks of drought, and the roads were dusty. Adam walked with a stout blackthorn stick, his flaccid figure sometimes swaying for poise and balance, and his snow-white hair rising gently in the soft breeze over his tender old face, now ploughed so deep with labour and sorrow. Chalse was driving his carrier's cart, whereon lay all that was left of Adam's belongings, save only what the good man carried in his purse. And seeing how heavy the road was to one of Adam's years, though his own were hardly fewer, poor old Chalse, recking nothing of dignity lost thereby, would have had him to mount the shafts and perch on the box behind the pony's tail. But Adam, thinking as little of pride, said No, that every herring should hang by its own gills,

and the pony had its full day's work before it; moreover, that it was his right to walk at his own expense now, having ridden twenty years at the expense of the island. So he kept the good blackthorn moving, and Greeba stepped along nimbly by his side. And when the Castletown coach overtook and passed them on its way to Douglas, and some of the farming folk who rode on it leaned over saucily and hailed Adam by his Christian name, he showed no shame or rancour, until, when the coach was gone, he caught a glimpse of the hot colour that had mounted to Greeba's cheeks. Then, without a word, he turned his mellow old face to his feet, and strode along a good half mile in silence.

And meantime, Chalse, thinking to lighten the burden of the way with cheerful talk, rattled along in his crazy screech on many subjects, but found that all came round, by some strange twist, to the one subject that might not be discussed. Thus looking at his pony he told of the donkey he had before it, the same that Michael Sunlocks rode long years ago; how he himself had fallen sick

and could not keep it, and so gave it without a penny to a neighbour for feeding it ; and how when he got better he wanted to borrow it, but the neighbour in base ingratitude and selfishness would not lend it without pay.

“Faith, it’s alwis lek that,” said Chalse. “Give a man yer shirt, and ye must cut yer lucky or he’ll be after axing ye for yer skin.”

When they came by Douglas, Chalse was for skirting round by the Spring Valley through Braddon, but old Adam, seeing his drift, would not pretend to be innocent of it, and said that if there were dregs in his cup he was in the way of draining them without making too many wry faces about it. And as for the people of the town, if they thought no shame to stare at him, he thought no shame to be stared at ; yet that what was good enough for himself might not be so for one who had less deserved it, and Greeba could go with Chalse by Braddon, and they would meet again on Onchan Hill.

To this Greeba would not consent ; and as it chanced there was little need, for when

they got into Douglas the town was all astir with many carriages and great troops of people making for the quay, so that no one seemed so much as to see the little company of three that came covered with dust out of the country roads.

"Aw, bad cess, what jeel is this?" said Chalse; and before they had crossed the little market-place by the harbour, where the bells of old St. Matthew's rang out a merry peal, they learned for certain the cause of the joyful commotion: for there they were all but run down by the swaying and surging crowds, that came shouting and cheering by the side of an open carriage, wherein sat a very old gentleman in the uniform of a soldier. It was, as Adam had already divined, the new Governor-General, Colonel Cornelius Smelt, newly arrived that day in the island as the first direct representative of the English crown in succession to the Lords of Man. And at that brave sight poor old Chalse, who jumbled in his distraught brain the idea of Adam's late position with that of his master the Duke of Athol, and saw nothing but that this gentle-

man, in his fine rigging, was come in Adam's place, and was even now on his way to Castletown to take possession of Government House, and that the bellowing mob that not a month before had doffed their caps before Adam's face, now shoved him off the pavement without seeing him, stamped and raved and shook his fist over the people, as if he would brain them.

They slept at Onchan that night, and next day they reached Kirk Maughold. And coming on the straggling old house at Lague, after so long an absence, Adam was visibly moved, saying he had seen many a humiliation since the days when he lived in it, and might the Lord make them profitable to his soul; but only let it please God to grant him peace and content and daily bread, and there should be no more going hence in the years that were left to him.

At that Greeba felt a tingling on both sides her heart, for her fears were many of the welcome that awaited them.

It was nigh upon noon, and the men were out in the fields; but Mrs. Fairbrother was at home, and she saw the three when they

opened the gate and came down under the elms.

"Now I thought as much," she said within herself, "and I warrant I know their errand."

Adam entered the house with what cheer of face he could command, being hard set to keep back his tears, and hailed his wife in a jovial tone, although his voice threatened to break, and sat himself down in his old seat by the chimney corner, with his blackthorn stick between his knees and his hands resting upon it. But Mrs. Fairbrother made no answer to his greeting, and only glanced from him to Greeba, who tripped softly behind him, and from Greeba to Chalse, who came shambling in after them, vacantly scratching his uncovered head. Then, drawing herself up, and holding back her skirts, she said very coldly, while her wrinkled face twitched—

"And pray what ill wind blows you here?"

"An ill wind indeed, Ruth," Adam answered, "for it is the wind of adversity. You must have heard of our misfortune,

since the whole island knows of it. Well, it is not for me to complain, for God shapes our ways, and He knows what is best. But I am an old man now, Ruth, little able to look to myself, still less to another, and"——

While he spoke, Mrs. Fairbrother tapped her foot impatiently, and then broke in with—

"Cut it short, sir. What do you want?"

Adam lifted his eyes with a stupefied look, and answered very quietly, "I want to come home, Ruth."

"Home!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother sharply. "And what home, if you please?"

Adam sat agape for a moment, and then said, speaking as calmly as before, "What home, Ruth? Why, what home but this?"

"This, indeed! This is not your home," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Not my home!" said Adam slowly, dropping back in his seat like one who is dumbfounded. "Not my home! Did you say that this was not my home?" he said, suddenly bracing up. "Why, woman, I was born here; so was my father before

me, and my father's father before him. Five generations of my people have lived and died here, and the very roof rafters over your head must know us."

"Hoity-toity!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother, "and if you had lived here much longer not a rafter of them all would have been left to shelter us. No, sir. I've kept the roof on this house, and it is mine."

"It is yours, indeed," said Adam slowly, "for I gave it you."

"You gave it me!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother. "Say I took it as my right when all that you had was slipping through your fingers like sand, as everything does that ever touches them."

At that hard word old Adam drew himself up with a great dignity of bearing, and said—

"There is one thing that has indeed slipped through my fingers like sand, and that is the fidelity of the woman who swore before God forty and odd years ago to love and honour me."

"Crinkum - crankum!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother. "A pretty thing, truly, that I

should toil and moil at my age to keep house and home together ready and waiting for you, when your zany doings have shut every other door against you. Misfortunes, indeed! A fine name for your mistakes!"

"I may have made mistakes, madam," said Adam; "but true it is, as the wise man has said, that he who has never made mistakes has never made anything."

"Tush!" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Ruth, do you refuse to take me in?" said Adam.

"This house is mine," said she; "mine by law and deed, as tight as wax can make it."

"Do you refuse to take me in?" said Adam again, rising to his feet.

"You have brought ruin on yourself by your shilly-shally and vain folly," said she; "and now you think to pat your nose and say your prayers by my fireside."

"Ruth," said Adam once more, "do you refuse to take me in?"

"Yes, and that I do," said she. "You would beggar me as you have beggared yourself, but that I warrant you never shall."

Then there was grim silence for a moment. Old Adam gripped hard the staff he leaned on, and all but as loud as the ticking of the clock was the beating of his heart.

"God give me patience," he said. "Yes, I'll bear it meekly. Ruth," he said huskily, "I'll not trouble you. Make yourself sure of that. While there's a horse-wallet to hang on my old shoulders, and a bit of barley bread to put in it, I'll ryve the country round, but I'll never come on my knees to you and say, 'I am your husband, I gave you all you had, and you are rich and I'm a beggar, and I am old—give me for charity my bed and board.'"

But, unable to support any longer the strife for mastery that was tearing at his heart, he gave way to his wrath and cried out in a loud voice, "Out on you, woman! Out on you! God forgive me the evil day I set eyes on you! God forgive me the damned day I took you to my breast to rend it."

While this had been going forward Greeba had stood silent at the back of her father's chair, with eyelashes quivering and the fingers of both hands clenched together. But now

she stepped forward and said, "Forgive him, mother. Do not be angry with him. He will be sorry for what he has said ; I'm sure he will. But only think, dear mother : he is in great, great trouble, and he is past work, and if this is not his home, then he is homeless."

And at the sound of that pleading voice Adam's wrath turned in part to tenderness, and he dropped back to the chair and began to weep.

"I am ashamed of my tears, child," he said ; "but they are not shed for myself. Nor did I come here for my own sake, though your mother thinks I did. No, child, no ; say no more. I'll repent me of nothing I have said to her—no, not one word. She is a hard, cruel woman ; but thank Heaven I have my sons left to me yet. She is not flesh of my flesh, though one with me in wedlock ; but they are, and they will never see their father turned from the door."

At that instant three of the six Fairbrothers, Asher, Ross, and Thurstan, came in from the stack-yard, with the smell of the furze-rick upon them that they had been

trimming for the cattle. And Adam, without waiting to explain, cried in the fervour of his emotion, "This is not your will, Asher?" Whereupon Asher, without any salutation, answered him, "I don't know what you mean, sir," and turned aside.

"He has damned your mother," said Mrs. Fairbrother, with her morning apron to her eyes, "and cursed the day he married her."

"But she is turning me out of the house," said Adam. "This house—my father's house."

"Ask her pardon, sir," Asher muttered, "and she will take you back."

"Her pardon! God in heaven!" Adam cried.

"You are an old man now, sir," said Thurstan.

"So I am; so I am," said Adam.

"And you are poor as well."

"That's true, Thurstan; that's true, though your brother forgets it."

"So you should not hold your head too high."

"What! Are you on her side also?"

Asher, Thurstan, Ross, you are my sons—would you see me turned out of the house?”

The three men hung their heads. “What mother says he must agree to,” muttered Asher.

“But I gave you all I had,” said Adam. “If I am old, I am your father, and if I am poor you know best who made me so.”

“We are poor, too, sir; we have nothing, and we do not forget who is to blame for it,” Thurstan growled.

“You gave everything away from us,” grumbled Ross; “and because your bargain is a rue bargain, you want us now to stand aback of you.”

And Stean, and Jacob, and John coming in at that moment, Jacob said very slyly, with something like a sneer—

“Ah, yes, and who took the side of a stranger against his own children? What of your good Michael Sunlocks now, sir? Is he longing for you? Or have you never had the scribe of a line from him since he turned his back on you four years ago?”

Then Greeba's eyes flashed with anger. “For shame,” she cried, “for shame! Oh,

you mean, pitiful men, to bait and badger him like this."

Jacob threw up his head and laughed, and Mrs. Fairbrother said, "Chut, girl, you're waxing apace with your big words, considering you're a chit that has wasted her days in London, and hasn't learned to muck a byre yet."

Adam did not hear her. He sat like a man who is stunned by a heavy blow. "Not for myself," he mumbled, "no, not for myself, though they all think it." Then he turned to his sons and said, "You think I came to beg for bed and board for myself, but you are wrong. I came to demand it for the girl. I may have no claim upon you, but she has, for she is one with you all and can ask for her own. She has no home with her father now, for it seems that he has none for himself; but her home is here, and here I mean to leave her."

"Not so fast, sir," said John. "All she can ever claim is what may one day be hers when we ourselves come into anything. Meantime, like her brothers, she has nothing but what she works for."

"Works for, you wagtail?" cried Adam; "she is a woman! Do you hear?—a woman!"

"Woman or man, where's the difference here?" said Gentleman John, and he snapped his fingers.

"Where's the difference, you jack-a-napes? Do you ask me where's the difference here? Here? In filial love and duty! There's the difference, you jack-a-napes."

"You are too old to quarrel with, sir; I will spare you," said Gentleman John.

"Spare me, you whipper-snapper! *You* will spare *me*! But oh, let me have patience! If I have cursed the day I first saw my wife let me not also curse the hour when she first bore me children and my heart was glad. Asher, you are my first-born, and Heaven knows what you were to me. You will not stand by and listen to this. She is your sister, my son. Think of it—your only sister."

Asher twisted about, where he sat by the window nook, pretending to doze, and said, "The girl is nothing to me. She is nothing to any of us. She has been with you all the

days of her life except such as you made her to spend with strangers. She is no sister of ours."

Then Adam turned to Ross, "And do you say the same?"

"What can she do here?" said Ross. "Nothing. This is no place for your great ladies. We work here, every man and woman of us, from daylight to dark, in the fields and the dairy. Best send her back to her fine friends in London."

"Ay," said Jacob, glancing up with a brazen smile into Greeba's face, "or marry her straight off—that's the shortest way. I heard a little bird tell of some one who might have her. Don't look astonished, Miss, for I make no doubt you know who it is. He is away on the mountains now, but he'll be home before long."

Greeba's eyes glistened, but not a muscle of her countenance changed. Only she clutched at the back of her father's chair and clung to it. And Adam, struggling hard to master the emotion that made his whole body to sway and tremble in his seat, said slowly, "If she is not your sister, at least

she is your mother's daughter, and a mother knows what that means." Then turning to Mrs. Fairbrother, who still stood apart with her housewife's apron to her eyes, he said, "Ruth, the child is your daughter, and by that deed you speak of she is entitled to her share of all that is here"—

"Yes," said Mrs. Fairbrother sharply, "but only when I am done with it."

"Even so," said Adam; "would you see the child want before that, or drive her into any marriage, no matter what?"

"I will take her," said Mrs. Fairbrother deliberately, "on one condition."

"What is it, Ruth?" said Adam; "name it, that I may grant it."

"That you shall give up all control of her, and that she shall give up all thought of you."

"What?"

"That you shall never again expect to see her, or hear from her, or hold commerce of any kind with her."

"But why? Why?"

"Because I may have certain plans for her future welfare that you might try to spoil."

“Do they concern Michael Sunlocks?”

“No, indeed,” said Mrs. Fairbrother, with a toss of the head.

“Then they concern young Jason, the Ice-lander,” said Adam.

“If so, it is *my* concernment,” said Mrs. Fairbrother.

“And that is your condition?”

“Yes.”

“And you ask me to part from her for ever? Think of it, she is my only daughter. She has been the light of my eyes. You have never loved her as I have loved her. You know it is the truth. And you ask me to see her no more, and never more to hear from her. Now, God punish you for this, you cold-hearted woman!”

“Take care, sir. Fewer words, or mayhap I will recall my offer. If you are wise you will be calm for the girl’s sake.”

“You are right,” he said, with his head down. “It is not for me to take the bread out of my child’s mouth. She shall choose for herself.”

Then he twisted about to where Greeba stood in silence behind his chair. “Greeba,”

he said, with a world of longing in his eyes, "my darling, you see how it is. I am old and very poor, and, Heaven pity my blind folly, I have no home to offer you, for I have none to shelter my own head. Don't fear for me, for I have no fear for myself. I will be looked to in the few days that remain to me, and come what may, the sorry race of my foolish life will soon be over. But you have made no mistakes that merit my misfortunes. So choose, my child, choose. It is poverty with me, or plenty with your mother. Choose, my child, choose; and let it be quickly, let it be quickly, for my old heart is bursting."

Then the brave girl drew herself proudly up, her brilliant eyes aflame, and her whole figure erect and quivering. "Choose?" she cried, in a piercing voice; "there is no choice. I will go with my father, and follow him over the world, though we have no covering but the skies above us."

And then Adam leapt from his chair to his feet, and the infirmity of his years seemed gone in an instant, and his wet face shone with the radiance of a great joy. "Do you

hear that, you people?" he cried. "There's grace, and charity, and unselfishness, and love left in the world still. Thank Heaven, I have not yet to curse the day my body brought forth children. Come, Greeba, we will go our ways, and God's protection will go with us. 'I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'"

He strode across to the door, then stopped and looked back to where his sons stood together with the looks of whipped dogs.

"And you, you unnatural sons," he cried, "I cast you out of my mind. I give you up to your laziness and drunkenness and vain pleasures. I am going to one who is not flesh of my flesh, and yet he is my son indeed."

Again he made for the door, and stopped on the threshold, and faced about towards his wife. "As for you, woman, your time will come. Remember that! Remember that!"

Greeba laid one hand softly on his shoulder and said, "Come, father, come," but again he looked back at his sons and said,

"Farewell, all of you ! Farewell ! You will see me no more. May a day like this that has come to your father never, never come to you."

And then all his brave bearing, his grand strength, broke down in a moment, and as the girl laid hold of his arm, lest he should reel and fall, he stumbled out at the threshold, sobbing beneath his breath, "Sunlocks, my boy ; Sunlocks, I am coming to you—I am coming to you."

Chalse A'Killey followed them out, muttering in an underbreath some deep imprecations that no one heeded. "Strange," said he, "the near I was to crucifying the Lord afresh and swearing a mortal heavy swear, only I remembered my catechism and the good John Wesley."

At the gate to the road they met Jason, who was coming down from Barrule with birds at his belt. With bewildered looks Jason stood and looked at them as they came up, a sorry spectacle in the brightness of the midday sun. Old Adam himself strode heavily along, with his face turned down and his white hair falling over his

cheeks. By his side Greeba walked, bearing herself as proudly as she might, with her head thrown back and her wet eyes trying hard to smile. A pace or two behind came Chalse with his pony and cart, grunting hoarsely in his husky throat. Not a word of greeting did they give to Jason, and he asked for no explanation, for he saw it all after a moment: they being now homeless had drifted back to their old home and had just been turned away from it. And not a word of pity did he on his part dare to offer them, but in the true sympathy of silence he stepped up to Adam and gave him his strong arm to lean upon, and then turned himself about to go their way.

They took the road to Ramsey, and little was said by any of them throughout the long two miles of the journey, save only by Chalse, who never ceased to mutter dark sayings to himself, whereof the chief were praises to God for delivering them without loss of life or limb or hand or eyen out of a den of lions, for thanks be to the Lord He had drawn their teeth.

Now, though the world is hard enough on

a good man in the hour of his trouble, there are ever more tender hearts to compassionate his distresses than bitter ones to triumph over his adversity, and when Adam Fairbrother came to Ramsey many a door was thrown open to him by such as were mindful of his former state and found nothing in his fall to merit their resentment. No hospitality would he accept, however, but took up his abode with Greeba in a little lodging in the market-place, with its face to the cross and its back towards the sea. And being safely housed there, he thanked Jason at the door for the help of his strong arm, and bade him come again at ten o'clock that night, if so be that he was in the way of doing a last service for a poor soul who might never again have it in his power to repay.

"I'll come back at ten," said Jason simply, and so he left them for the present.

And when he was gone Adam said to Greeba as he turned indoors, "A fine lad that, and as simple as a child, but woe to the man who deceives him. Ay, or to the woman either. But you'll never do it, girl? Eh? Never? Never?"

“Why, father, what can you mean? Are we not going away together?” said Greeba.

“True, child, true,” said Adam; and so without further answer to her question twice repeated, he passed with her into the house.

But Adam had his meaning as well as his reason for hiding it. Through the silent walk from Lague he had revolved their position and come to a fixed resolution concerning it. In the heat of his emotion it had lifted up his heart that Greeba had chosen poverty with him before plenty with her mother and her brothers, but when his passion had cooled he rebuked himself for permitting her to do so. What right had he to drag her through the slough of his own necessities? He was for going away, not knowing the fate that was before him, but on what plea made to his conscience dare he take her with him? He was old, his life was behind him, and save herself he had no ties. What did it matter to him how his struggle should end? But she was young, she was beautiful, she might form new friendships, the world was before her, the world might yet be at her feet, and life,

so sweet and so sad, and yet so good a thing withal, was ready and waiting for her.

Once he thought of Michael Sunlocks, and that the arms that would be open to himself in that distant land would not be closed to Greeba. And once he thought of Jason, and that to leave her behind was to help the schemes that would bring them together. But put it as he would no farther could he get than this, that she must stay, and he must go away alone.

Yet, knowing the strength of her purpose, he concealed his intention, and his poor bewildered old head went about its work of preparation very artfully. It was Friday, and still not far past noon, when they reached their lodging by the cross. After a hasty meal he set out into the town, leaving Greeba to rest, for she had walked far since early morning. At the quay he inquired the date of a vessel that called there sometimes in summer on its passage from Ireland to Iceland, and to his surprise he found that she was even then in the harbour, and would go out with the first tide of the next day, which would flow at one o'clock in the morning.

Thereupon he engaged his berth, and paid for his passage. It cost six pounds, besides a daily charge of four shillings for rations. The trip was calculated to last one month, with fair wind and weather, such as then promised. Adam counted the cost, and saw that with all present debts discharged, and future ones considered, he might have somewhat between six and seven pounds in his pocket when he set foot in Reykjavík. Being satisfied with this prospect, he went to the High Bailiff for his licence to leave the island.

Greeba had heard nothing of this, and as soon as night fell she went up to bed at her father's entreaty. Her room was at the back of the house and looked out over the sea, and there she saw the young moon rise over the waters as she undressed and lay down to sleep.

Prompt to his hour Jason came, and then Adam told him all.

"I am going away," he said, "far away, indeed into your own country. I go to-night, though my daughter, who is asleep, knows nothing of my intention. Will you do me a service?"

“Try me,” said Jason.

And then Adam asked him to stay in Ramsey overnight, that he might be there when Greeba came down in the morning, to break the news to her that her father had gone, and to take her back with him to Lague.

“They will not say no to her, seeing her father is not with her; and the time is coming when she will hold her right to a share of all they have, and none of them dare withhold it.”

Jason, who had been up to Lague, had heard of all that had passed there, and played his own part too, though he said nothing of that. He was now visibly agitated. His calm strength had left him. His eyes were a-fire, his face twitched, his hands trembled, and he was plainly struggling to say what his quivering lips refused to utter.

“Is there no other way?” he asked. “Must she go back to Lague? Is there no help for it?”

“None,” said Adam, “for she is penniless, God forgive me, and beggars may not be choosers.”

At that word Jason was unable to support any longer the wild labouring of his heart.

"Yes, yes, but there *is* a way," he cried, "for there is one to whom she is rich enough though he is poor himself, for he would give his life's blood if so be that he could buy her. Many a day he has seen all and stood aside and been silent, because afraid to speak, but he must speak now or never."

Hearing this, Adam's face looked troubled, and he answered—

"I will not misdoubt you, my good lad, or question whom you mean."

And Jason's tongue being loosed at last, the hot words came from him like a flood.

"I have been an idle fellow, sir, I know that; good for nothing in the world, any more than the beasts of the field, and maybe it's because I've had nobody but myself to work for; but give me the right to stand beside her and you shall see what I can do, for no brother shall return her cold looks for her sweetness, and never again shall she go back where she will only be despised."

"You are a brave lad, Jason," said Adam, as best he could for the tears that choked

him, "and though I have long had other thoughts concerning her, yet could I trust her to your love and keeping, and go my ways with content. But no, no, my lad, it is not for me to choose for her; and neither is it for her to choose now."

Pacified by that answer, Jason gave his promise freely, faithfully, to do what Adam had asked of him. And the night being now well worn towards midnight, with the first bell of the vessel rung, and old Chalse fussing about in busy preparation, the time had come for Adam to part from Greeba. To bid her farewell was impossible, and to go away without doing so was well-nigh as hard. All he could do was to look upon her in her sleep and whisper his farewell in his heart. So he entered on tip-toe the room where she lay. Softly the moon shone through the window from across the white sea, and fell upon the bed. Pausing at the door he listened for her breathing, and at last he heard it, for the night was very still, and only by the sea's gentle splash on the beach was the silence broken. Treading softly he approached the bedside, and there she lay, and

the quiet moonlight lay over her—the dear, dear girl, so brave and happy-hearted. Her lips seemed to smile ; perhaps she was dreaming. He must take his last look now. Yet no, he must kiss her first. He reached across and lightly touched her pure forehead with his lips. Then she moved and moaned in her sleep, and then her peaceful breathing came again. “Now peace be with her,” Adam murmured, “and the good hand to guard her of the Father of all.”

So Adam Fairbrother went his way, leaving Greeba behind him, and early the next morning Jason took her back to Lague.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOOING OF JASON.

Now the one thing that Jason did not tell to Adam Fairbrother was that, on hearing from Jacob, as spokesman of his brothers, the story of their treatment of Greeba and their father, he had promised to break every bone in their six worthless bodies, and vowed never to darken their door again. His vow he could not keep if he was also to keep his word with Adam, and he deferred the fulfilment of his promise; but from that day he left Lague as a home, and pitched his tent with old Davy Kerruish in Maughold village, at a little cottage by the sundial that stood by the gates of the church. Too old for the sea, and now too saintly for smuggling, Davy pottered about the churchyard as gravedigger—for Maughold had then no sexton—with a living of three and sixpence a service, and a mar-

vellously healthy parish. So the coming of Jason to share bed and board with him was a wild whirl of the wheel of fortune, and straightway he engaged an ancient body at ninepence a week to cook and clean for them.

By this time Jason had spent nearly half his money, for he had earned nothing, but now he promptly laid his idle habits aside. No more did he go up to the mountains, and no longer out on to the sea. His nets were thrown over the lath of the ceiling, his decoy was put in a cage, his fowling-piece stood in the corner, and few were the birds that hung at his belt. He was never seen at the "Hibernian," and he rarely scented up the house with tobacco smoke. On his first coming he lay two days and nights in bed without food or sleep, until Davy thought surely he was sick, and willy-nilly was for having his feet bathed in mustard and hot water, and likewise his stomach in rum and hot gruel. But he was only settling his plans for the future, and having hit on a scheme he leapt out of bed like a greyhound, plunged his head up to the neck in a bucket

of cold water, came out of it with gleaming eyes, red cheeks, and a vapour rising from his wet skin, and drying himself with a whirl on a coarse towel, he laid hold with both hands of a chunk of the last hare he had snared, and munched it in vast mouthfuls.

"Davy," he cried, with the white teeth still going, "are there many corn mills this side of the island?"

"Och, no, boy," said Davy; "but scarce as fresh herrings at Christmas."

"Any mill nearer than old Moore's at Sulby, and Callow's wife's down at Laxey?"

"Aw, no, boy, the like of them isn't in."

"Any call for them nearer, Davy?"

"Aw, 'deed, yes, boy, yes; and the farmer men alwis keen for one in Maughold, too. Aw, yes, keen, boy, keen; and if a man was after building one here they'd be thinking diamonds of him."

"Then why hasn't somebody set up a mill before now, Davy?"

"Well, boy, ye see a Manxman is just the cleverest of all the people goin' at takin' things aisy. Aw, clever at it, boy, clever!"

There is a full stream of water that

tumbles into the sea over the brows of Porty-Vullin, after singing its way down from the heights of Barrule. Jason had often marked it as he came and went from the hut of Stephen Orry that contained his stuffed birds, and told himself what a fine site it was for anybody that wanted to build a water mill. He remembered it now with a freshened interest, and bowling away to Mrs. Fairbrother at Lague for the purchase of a rod of the land that lay between the road and the beach, to the Bailiff for the right of water, and to old Coobragh for the hire of a cart to fetch stones from the screes where the mountains quarried them, he was soon in the thick of his enterprise.

He set the carpenter to work at his wheel, the smith at his axle, and the mason at his stones, but for the walls and roof of the mill itself he had no help but old Davy's. Early and late, from dawn to dusk, he worked at his delving and walling, and when night fell in he leaned over the hedge and smoked and measured out with his eye the work he meant to do next day. When his skill did not keep pace with his ardour, he

lay a day in bed thinking hard, and then got up and worked yet harder. In less than two months he had his first roof-timbers well and safely pitched, and if he went no farther it was because the big hope wherewith his simple heart had been buoyed up came down with a woful crash.

“Aw, smart and quick, astonishin’,” said old Davy of Jason to Mrs. Fairbrother at Lague. “Aw, ’deed, yes, and clever too, and steady still. The way he works them walls is grand. I’ll go bail the farming men will be thinking diamonds of him when he makes a start.”

“And then I wouldn’t doubt, but he’ll be in the way of making a fortune, too,” said Mrs. Fairbrother.

“I wouldn’ trust, I wouldn’ trust,” said Davy.

“And he’ll be thinking of marrying, I suppose. Isn’t he, Davy?” said Mrs. Fairbrother.

“Marrying, is it?” said Davy; “aw, divil a marry, ma’am. The boy’s innocent. Aw, yes, innocent as a baby.”

Mrs. Fairbrother had her own good rea-

sons for thinking otherwise, though Jason came to Lague but rarely. So with hint and innuendo she set herself to see how Greeba stood towards the future she had planned for her. And Greeba was not slow to see her mother's serious drift under many a playful speech. The hours she had spent at Lague since the sad surprise that brought her back were not all cheerless. Little loth for the life of the farm, notwithstanding Ross's judgment, she had seemed to fall into its ways with content. Her mother's hints touched her not at all, for she only laughed at them with a little of her old gaiety; but one day within the first weeks she met Jason, and then she felt troubled. He was very serious, and spoke only of what he was doing, but before his grave face her gay friendliness broke down in an instant.

On reaching home she wrote a letter to Michael Sunlocks. Never a word had she heard from him since he left the island four years ago, so she made excuse of her father's going away to cover her unmaidenly act, and asked him to let her know if her father had arrived, and how he was, and

where, with some particulars of himself also, and whether he meant to come back to the Isle of Man, or had quite made his home in Iceland; with many a sly glance, too, at her own condition, such as her modesty could not forbear, but never a syllable about Jason, for a double danger held her silent on that head. This she despatched to him, realising at length that she loved him, and that she must hear from him soon, or be lost to him for ever.

And waiting for Michael's answer she avoided Jason. If she saw him on the road she cut across the fields, and if he came to the house she found something to take her out of the kitchen. He saw her purpose quickly, and his calm eyes saddened, and his strong face twitched, but he did not flinch; he went on with his work steadily, earnestly, only with something less of heart, something less of cheer. Her mother saw it too, and then the playful hints changed to angry threats.

"What has he done?" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Nothing," said Greeba.

“Have you anything against him?”

“No.”

“Then why are you driving him from the house?”

Greeba could make no answer.

“Are you thinking of some one else?”

Again Greeba was silent.

“I’ll beg of you to mend your manners,” cried Mrs. Fairbrother. “It’s full time you were wedded and gone.”

“But perhaps I don’t wish to leave home,” said Greeba.

“Tush!” said Mrs. Fairbrother. “The lad is well enough, and if he hasn’t land, he has some money, and is like to have more. I’ll give you a week to think of it, and if he ever comes and speaks for you, I’ll ask you to give him his civil answer. You will be three-and-twenty come Martinmas, and long before your mother was as old as that she had a couple of your brothers to fend for.”

“Some of my brothers are nearly twice my age, and you don’t ask them to marry,” said Greeba.

“That’s a different matter,” said Mrs. Fairbrother.

It turned out that the week was more than enough to settle the difference between Greeba and her mother, for in less time than that Mrs. Fairbrother was stricken down by a mortal illness. It was only a month since she had turned Adam from her door, but her time was already at hand, and more than he predicted had come to pass. She had grown old without knowing a day's illness ; her body, like a rocky headland that gives no sign of the seasons, had only grown harder every year, with a face more deeply seamed ; but when she fell it was at one blow of life's ocean. Three little days she had lost appetite, on the morning of the fourth day she had found a fever in a neglected cattle trough that had drained into the well, and before night she had taken her death-warrant.

She knew the worst, and faced it, but her terror was abject. Sixty-five years she had scraped and scratched, but her time was come. She had thought of nothing save her treasure, and there it lay, yet it brought her no solace.

Two days she tossed in agony, remem-

bering the past, and the price she had paid, and made others to pay, for all that she had held so dear and must leave so soon, for now it was nothing worth. Then she sent for the parson, Parson Gell, who was still living, but very old. The good man came, thinking his mission was spiritual comfort, but Mrs. Fairbrother would hear nothing of that. As she had lived without God in the world, even so did she intend to die. But some things that had gone amiss with her in her eager race after riches she was minded to set right before her time came to go. In lending she had charged too high an interest; in paying she had withheld too much for money; in seizing for mortgage she had given too little grace. So she would repay before it was too late, for Death was opening her hands.

“Send for them all,” she cried; “there’s Kinvig of Ballagawne, and Corlett’s widow at Ballacreggan, and Quirk of Claughbane, and the children of Joughan, the weaver, at Sherragh Vane, and Tubman of Ginger Hall, and John-Billy-Bob at Cornah Glen, and that hard bargainer, old Kermode of Port-e-chee. You see I remember them all, for I never

forget anything. Send for them, and be quick fetching them, or it'll be waste of time for them to come."

"I'll do it, Mrs. Fairbrother," mumbled the old parson through his toothless gums, "for right is right, and justice justice."

"Chut!" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

But the parson's deaf ears did not hear. "And ah!" he said, "the things of this world seem worthless, do they not, when we catch a glimpse into eternity?"

"Less cry and more wool," said Mrs. Fairbrother drily. "I wouldn't trust but old as you are you'd look with more love on a guinea than the Gospel calls for."

The people answered the parson's summons quickly enough, and came to Lague next morning, the men in their rough beavers, the old women in their long blue cloaks, and they followed the old parson into Mrs. Fairbrother's room, whispering among themselves, some in a doleful voice, others in an eager one, some with a cringing air, and others with an arrogant expression. The chamber was darkened by a heavy curtain over the window, but they could see Mrs. Fairbrother

propped up by pillows, whereon her thin, pinched, faded face showed very white. She had slept never a moment of the night, and through all the agony of her body her mind had been busy with its reckonings. These she had made Greeba to set down in writing, and now with the paper on the counterpane before her, and a linen bag of money in her hand, she sat ready to receive her people. When they entered there was deep silence for a moment, wherein her eyes glanced over them, as they stood in their strong odours of health around her.

"Where's your brother, 'Liza Joughan?" she said to a young woman at the foot of the bed.

"Gone off to 'meriky, ma'am," the girl faltered, "for he couldn't live after he lost the land."

"Where's Quirk of Claughbane?" asked Mrs. Fairbrother, turning to the parson.

"The poor man's gone, sister," said the parson in a low tone. "He died only the week before last."

Mrs. Fairbrother's face assumed a darker shade, and she handed the paper to Greeba.

"Come, let's have it over," she said, and then, one by one, Greeba read out the names.

"Daniel Kinvig, twelve pounds," Greeba read, and thereupon an elderly man with a square head stepped forward.

"Kinvig," said Mrs. Fairbrother, fumbling the neck of the linen bag, "you borrowed a hundred pounds for two years, and I charged you twelve per cent. Six per cent. was enough, and here is the difference back to your hand."

So saying, she counted twelve pound notes and held them out in her wrinkled fingers, and the man took them without a word.

"Go on," she cried sharply.

"Mrs. Corlett, two pounds," read Greeba, and a woman in a widow's cap and a long cloak came up, wiping her eyes.

"Bella Corlett," said Mrs. Fairbrother, "when I took over Ballacreggan for my unpaid debt, you begged for the feather bed your mother died on, and the chair that had been your father's. I didn't give them, though I had enough besides, so here are two pounds to you, and God forgive me."

The woman took the money, and began to cry.

"God reward you," she whimpered. "It's in heaven you'll be rewarded, ma'am."

But Mrs. Fairbrother brushed her aside, with an angry word and a fretful gesture, and called on Greeba for the next name on the list.

"Peter Kermode, twenty-four pounds ten shillings," read Greeba, and a little old man, with a rough head and a grim, hard, ugly face, jostled through the people about him.

"Kermode," said Mrs. Fairbrother, "you always tried to cheat me, as you try to cheat everybody else, and when you sold me those seventy sheep for six shillings apiece last back end you thought they were all taking the rot, and you lost thirty pounds by them, and brought yourself to beggary, and serve you right too. But I sold them safe and sound for a pound apiece three days after; so here's half of the difference, and just try to be honest for the rest of your days. And it won't be a long task either, for it's plain to see you're not far from death's door, and it isn't worth while to be a blood-sucker."

At that she paused for breath, and to press her lean hand over the place of the fire in her chest.

"Ye say true, ma'am, aw, true, true," said the man, in a lamentable voice. "And in the hour of death it must be a great consolation to do right. Let's sing wi' ye, ma'am. I'm going in the straight way myself now, and plaze the Lord, I'll backslide no more."

And while he counted out the money in his grimy palm, the old hypocrite was for striking up a Ranter hymn, beginning—

"Oh, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable friend."

But Mrs. Fairbrother cried on him to be silent, and then gathering strength she went on with the others until all were done. And passing to each his money, as the grasp of Death's own hand relaxed the hard gripe of her tight fingers, she trembled visibly, held it out and drew it back again, and held it out again, as though she were reluctant to part with it even yet.

And when all was over she swept the people out of the room with a wave of her hand, and fell back to the bolster.

Then Greeba, thinking it a favourable moment to plead for her father, mentioned his name, and eyed her mother anxiously. Mrs. Fairbrother seemed not to hear at first, and being pressed, she answered wrathfully, saying she had no pity for her husband, and that not a penny of her money should go to him.

But late the same day, after the doctor, who had been sent for from Douglas, had wagged his head and made a rueful face over her, she called for her sons, and they came and stood about her, and Greeba, who had nursed her from the beginning, was also by her side.

“Boys,” she said, between fits of pain, “keep the land together, and don’t separate ; and mind you bring no women here, or you’ll fall to quarrelling, and if any of you must marry let him have his share and go. Don’t forget the heifer that’s near to calving, and see that you fodder her every night. Fetch the geese down from Barrule at Martinmas, and count the sheep on the mountains once a week, for the people of Maughold are the worst thieves in the island.”

They gave her their promise duly to do and not to do what she had named, and being little used to such scenes, they grew uneasy and began to shamle out.

“And, boys, another thing,” she said faintly, stretching her wrinkled hand across the counterpane, “give the girl her rights, and let her marry whom she will.”

This, also, they promised her; and then she, thinking her duty done as an honest woman towards man and the world, but recking nothing of higher obligations, lay backward with a groan.

Now it did not need that the men should marry in order that they might quarrel, for hardly was the breath out of their mother's body when they set to squabbling, without any woman to help them. Asher grumbled that Thurstan was drunken, Thurstan grumbled that Asher was lazy, Asher retorted that being the eldest son, if he had his rights he would have every foot of the land, and Ross and Stean arose in fury at the bare thought of either being hinds on their brother's farm or else taking the go-by at his hands. So they quarrelled, until Jacob

said that there was plainly but one way of peace between them, and that was to apportion the land into equal parts and let every man take his share, and then the idleness of Asher and the drunkenness of Thurstan would be to each man his own affair. At that they remembered that the lands of Lague, then the largest estate on the north of the island, had once been made up of six separate farms, with a house to each of them, though five of the six houses had long stood empty. And seeing that there were just six of themselves, it seemed, as Jacob said, as if Providence had so appointed things to see them out of their difficulty. But the farms, though of pretty equal acreage, were of various quality of land, and therein the quarrelling set in afresh.

“I’ll take Ballacraigne,” said Thurstan.

“No, but I’ll take it,” said Jacob, “for I’ve always worked the meadows.”

In the end they cast lots, and then, each man having his farm assigned to him, all seemed to be settled when Asher cried—

“But what about the girl?”

At that they looked stupidly into each

other's faces, for never once in all their bickerings had they given a thought to Greeba. But Jacob's resource was not yet at an end, for he suggested that Asher should keep her at Lague, and at harvest the other five should give her something, and that her keep and their gifts together should be her share ; and if she had all she needed what more could she wish ?

They did not consult Greeba on this head, and before she had time to protest they were in the thick of a fresh dispute among themselves. The meadow lands of Ballacraine had fallen to Jacob after all, while Thurstan got the high and stony lands of Ballafayle, at the foot of Barrule. Thurstan was less than satisfied, and remembering that Jacob had drawn out the papers for the lottery, he suspected cheating. So he made himself well and thoroughly drunk at the "Hibernian," and set off for Ballacraine to argue the question out. He found Jacob in no mood for words of recrimination, and so he proceeded to thrash him, and to turn him off the fat lands and settle himself upon them.

Then there was great commotion among

the Fairbrothers, and each of the other four took a side in the dispute. The end of it all was a trial for ejectment at Deemster's Court at Ramsey, and another for assault and battery. The ejectment came first, and Thurstan was ousted, and then six men of Maughold got up into the juror's box to try the charge of assault. There was little proof, but a multitude of witnesses, and before all were heard the Deemster adjourned the court for lunch and ventilation, for the old court-house had become poisonous with the reeking breath of the people that crowded it.

And the jury being free to lunch where they pleased, each of the parties to the dispute laid hold of his man and walked him off by himself, to persuade him, also to treat him, and perhaps to bribe him. Thus Thurstan was at the Saddle Inn with a jurymen on either hand, and Jacob was at the Plough with as many by his side, and Ross and Stean had one each at the tavern by the Cross. "You're right," said the jurymen to Thurstan. "Drink up," said Thurstan to the jurymen. "I'm your man," said the

jurymen to Jacob. "Slip this in your fob," said Jacob to the jurymen. Then they reeled back to the court-house arm-in-arm, and when the six good men of Maughold had clambered up to their places again, the juror's box contained several quarts more ale than before.

The jury did not agree on a verdict, and the Deemster dismissed them with hot reproaches. But some justice to Greeba seemed likely to come of this wild farce of law, for an advocate, who had learned what her brothers were doing for her, got up a case against them, for lack of a better brief, and so far prevailed on her behalf that the Deemster ordered that each of the six should pay her eight pounds yearly, as an equivalent for the share of land they had withheld.

Now Red Jason had spent that day among the crowd at the court-house, and his hot blood had shown as red as his hair through his tanned cheeks, while he looked on at the doings of Thurstan of the swollen eyes and Jacob of the foxy face. He stood up for a time at the back like a statue of wrath with a dirty mist of blood dancing before it.

Then his loathing and scorn getting the better of him, he cursed beneath his breath in Icelandic and English, and his restless hands scraped in and out of his pockets as if they itched to fasten on somebody's throat, or pick up something as a dog picks up a rat. All he could do was to curl his lip in a terrible grin, like the grin of a mastiff, until he caught a sidelong glimpse of Greeba's face with the traces of tears upon it, and then, being unable to control any longer the unsatisfied yearning of his soul to throttle Jacob, and smash the ribs of Thurstan, and give dandified John a backhanded facer, he slunk out of the place, as if ashamed of himself that he was so useless. When all was over he stalked off to Port-y-Vullin, but, too nervous to settle to his work that day, he walked in the evening in the direction of Lague, not thinking to call there, yet powerless to keep away.

Greeba had returned from Ramsey alone, being little wishful for company, so heavy was her heart. She had seen how her brothers had tried to rob her, and how beggarly was the help the law could give her,

for though the one might order the others might not obey. So she had sat herself down in her loneliness, thinking that she was indeed solitary in all the world, with no one to look up to any more, and no strong hand to rest on. It was just then that Jason pushed open the door of the porch, and stood on the threshold, in all the quiet strength of his untainted young manhood, and the calm breadth of his simple manner.

"Greeba, may I come in?" he said in a low tone.

"Yes," she answered, only just audibly, and then he entered.

She did not raise her eyes, and he did not offer his hand, but as he stood beside her she grew stronger, and as she sat before him he felt that a hard lump that had gathered at his heart was melting away.

"Listen to me, Greeba," he said. "I know all your troubles, and I'm very sorry for them. No, that's not what I meant to say, but I'm at a loss for words. Greeba!"

"Yes!"

"Doesn't it seem as if Fate meant us to come together—you and me. The world

has dealt very ill with both of us thus far. But you are a woman and I am a man; and only give me the right to fight for you" ——

As he spoke he saw the tears spring to her eyes, and he paused, and his wandering fingers found the hand that hung by her side.

"Greeba!" he cried again, but she stopped the hot flow of the words that she saw were coming.

"Leave me now," she said. "Don't speak to me to-day; no, not to-day, Jason. Go—go!"

He obeyed her without a word, and picking up his cap from where it had fallen at his feet, he left her sitting there with her face covered by her hands.

She had suddenly bethought herself of Michael Sunlocks: that she had pledged her word to wait for him, that she had written to him, and that his answer might come at any time. Next day she went down to the post-office at Ramsey to inquire for a letter. None had yet come for her, but a boat from the Shetlands that might fetch mails from Iceland would arrive within three days. Prompt to that time she went down to

Ramsey again, but though the boat had put into harbour and discharged its mails there was still no letter for her. The Irish trader between Dublin and Reykjavík was expected on its homeward trip in a week or nine days more, and Greeba's heart lay low and waited. In due course the trader came, but no letter for her came with it. Then her hope broke down. Sunlocks had forgotten her; perhaps he cared for her no longer; it might even be that he loved some one else. And so with the fall of her hope her womanly pride arose, and she asked herself very haughtily, but with tears in her big dark eyes, what it mattered to her after all. Only she was very lonely, and so weary and heart-sick, and with no one to look to for the cheer of life.

She was still at Lague, where her eldest brother was now sole master, and he was very cold with her, for he had taken it in mighty high dudgeon that a sister of his should have used the law against him. So, feeling how bitter it was to eat the bread of another, she had even begun to pinch herself of food, and to sit at meals but rarely.

But Jason came again about a fortnight after the trial, and he found Greeba alone as before. She was sitting by the porch, in the cool of the summer evening, combing out the plaits of her long brown hair, and looking up at Barrule, that was heaving out large and black in the sundown, with a nightcap of silver vapour over its head in the clouds.

"I can stay away no longer," he said, with his eyes down. "I've tried and can't, and the days creep along. So think no ill of me if I come too soon."

Greeba made him no answer, but thought within herself that if he had stayed a day longer he must have stayed a day too long.

"It's a weary heart I've borne," he said, "since I saw you last, and you bade me leave you, and I obeyed, though it cost me dear. But let that go."

Still she did not speak, and looking up into her face he saw how pale she was, and weak and ill, as he thought.

"Greeba," he cried, "what has happened?"

But she only smiled and gave him a look of kindness, and said that nothing was amiss with her.

"Yes, by the Lord, but something *is* amiss," he said, with his blood in his face in an instant. "What is it?" he cried. "What is it?"

"Only that I have not eaten much to-day," she said, "that's all."

"All!" he cried. "All!"

He seemed to understand everything at a glance, as if the great power of his love had taught him.

"Now, by God"—he said, and shook his fist at the house in front of him.

"Hush!" Greeba whispered, "it is my own doing. I am loth to be beholden to any one, least of all to such as forget me."

The sweet tenderness of her look softened him, and he cast down his eyes again, and said—

"Greeba, there is one who can never forget you; morning and night you are with him, for he loves you dearly; ay, Greeba, as never maiden was loved by any one since the world began. No, there isn't the man born, Greeba, who loves a woman as he loves you, for he has nothing else to love in all the wide world."

She looked up at him as he spoke and saw the courage in his eyes, and that he who loved her stood as a man beside her. At that her heart swelled and her eyes began to fill, and he saw her tears and knew that he had won her, and he plucked her to his breast with a wild cry of joy, and she lay there and wept, while he whispered to her through her hair.

“My love! my love! love of my life!” he whispered.

“I was so lonely,” she murmured.

“You shall be lonely no more,” he whispered, “no more, my love, no more,” and his soft words stole over her drooping head.

He stayed an hour longer by her side, laughing much and talking greatly, and when he went off she heard him break into a song as he passed out at the gate—

“O, where are the graces
Like merry faces,
Whereon glad thoughts shine
As the golden wine,
Or the bloom of the ling
That bursts in the spring?
Then hurrah for the girls
Of the nut-brown curls,
And hurrah for the merry faces.”

Then, being once more alone, Greeba sat and tried to compose herself, wondering if she should ever repent what she had done so hastily, and if she could love this man as he well deserved and would surely wish. Her meditations were broken by the sound of Jason's voice. He was coming back with his happy step, and singing as merrily as he went.

"What a blockhead I am," he said cheerily, popping his head in at the door. "I forgot to deliver you a letter that the postmaster gave me when I was at Ramsey this morning. You see it's from Iceland. Good news from your father, I trust. God bless him!"

So saying he pushed the letter into Greeba's hand and went his way jauntily, singing as before the gay song of his native country—

"Then hurrah for the girls
Of the nut-brown curls,
And hurrah for the merry faces."

The letter was from Michael Sunlocks.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RISE OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS.

“DEAR GREEBA,” the letter ran, “I am sorely ashamed of my long silence, which is deeply ungrateful towards your father, and very ungracious towards you. Though something better than four years have passed away since I left the little green island, the time has seemed to fly more swiftly than a weaver’s shuttle, and I have been immersed in many interests and beset by many anxieties. But I well know that nothing can quite excuse me, and I would wrong the truth if I were to say that among fresh scenes and fresh faces I have borne about me day and night the memory of all I left behind. So I shall not pretend to a loyalty whereof I have given you no assurance, but will just pray of you to take me for what I truly am—a rather thankless fellow, who has sometimes found himself in danger of

forgetting old friends in the making of new ones, and been very heartily ashamed of himself. Nevertheless, the sweetest thoughts of these four years have been thoughts of the old home, and the dearest hope of my heart has been to return to it some day. That day has not yet come; but it is coming, and now I seem to see it very near. So, dear Greeba, forgive me if you can, or at least bear me no grudge, and let me tell you of some of the strange things that have befallen me since we parted.

“When I came to Iceland it was not to join the Latin school of the venerable Bishop John (a worthy man and good Christian, whom it has become my happiness to call my friend), but on an errand of mercy, whereof I may yet say much but can tell you little now. The first of my duties was to find a good woman and true wife who had suffered deeply by the great fault of another, and having found her, to succour her in her distress. It says much for the depth of her misfortunes that, though she had been the daughter of the Governor-General, and the inhabitants of the capital

of Iceland are fewer than two thousand in all, I was more than a week in Reykjavík before I came upon any real news of her. When I found her at last she was in her grave. The poor soul had died within two months of my landing on these shores, and the joiner of the cathedral was putting a little wooden peg, inscribed with the initials of her name, over her grave in the forgotten quarter of the cemetery where the poor of this place are buried. Such was the close of the first chapter of my quest.

“ But I had still another duty, and, touched by the pathos of that timeless death, I set about it with new vigour. This was to learn if the unhappy soul had left a child behind her, and if she had done so, to look for it as I had looked for its mother, and succour it as I would have succoured her. I found that she had left a son, a lad of my own age or thereabouts, and therefore less than twenty at that time. Little seemed to be known about him, save that he had been his mother’s sole stay and companion, that they had both lived apart from their neighbours, and much under the shadow of their distresses. At

her death he had been with her, and he had stood by her grave, but never afterwards had he been seen by any one who could make a guess as to what had become of him. But, whilst I was still in the midst of my search, the body of a young man came ashore on the island of Engy, and though the features were no longer to be recognised, yet there were many in the fishing quarter of this city who could swear, from evidences of stature and of clothing, to its identity with him I looked for; and thus the second chapter of my quest seemed to close at a tomb.

“I cannot say that I was fully satisfied, for nothing that I had heard of the boy’s character seemed to agree with any thought of suicide, and I noticed that the good old Lutheran priest who had sat with the poor mother in her last hours shook his head at the mention of it, though he would give no reasons for his determined unbelief. But perhaps my zeal was flagging, for my search ceased from that hour, and as often since as my conscience has reproached me with a mission unfulfilled I have appeased it with the assurance that mother and son are both

gone, and death itself has been my sure abridgment.

“Some day, dear Greeba, I will tell you who sent me (which you may partly guess), and who they were to whom I was sent. But it is like the way of the world itself, that, having set ourselves a task, we must follow it as regularly as the sun rises and sets, and the day comes and the night follows, or once letting it slip it will drop into a chaos. For a thing happened just at that moment of my wavering which altered the current of my life, so that my time here, which was to be devoted to an unselfish work, seems to have been given up to personal ambitions.

“I have mentioned that the good woman had been the daughter of the Governor-General. His name was Jorgen Jorgensen. He had turned her adrift because of her marriage, which was in defiance of his wish, and through all the years of her poverty he had either abandoned her to her necessities or her pride had hidden them from his knowledge. But he had heard of her death when it came to pass, and by that time his stubborn spirit had begun to feel the lone-

someness of his years, and that life was slipping past him without the love and tenderness of a child to sweeten it. So, partly out of remorse, but mainly out of selfishness, he had set out to find the son whom his daughter had left behind her, thinking to give the boy the rightful place of a grandson by his side. It was then that on the same search our paths converged, and Jorgen Jorgensen met with me, and I with Jorgen Jorgensen. And when the news reached Reykjavík of the body that had come out of the sea at Engy, the Governor was among the first to give credence to the rumour that the son of his daughter was dead. But meantime he had found something in me to interest him, and now he asked who I was, and what and why I was come. His questions I answered plainly, without concealment or any disguise, and when he heard that I was the son of Stephen Orry, though he knew too well what my father had been to him and to his daughter (all of which, dear Greeba, you shall yet learn at length), he asked me to take that place in his house that he had intended for his daughter's son.

“How I came to agree to this while I distrusted him and almost feared him would take too long to tell. Only remember that I was in a country foreign to me, though it was my father’s home, that I was trifling with my errand there, and had no solid business of life beside. Enough for the present that I did so agree, and that I became the housemate of Jorgen Jorgensen. His treatment of me varied with his moods, which were many. Sometimes it was harsh, sometimes almost genial, and always selfish. I think I worked for him as a loyal servant should, taking no account of his promises, and never shutting my eyes to my true position or his real aims in having me. And often and again, when I remembered all that we both knew of what had gone before, I thought the fates themselves must shriek at the turn of fortune’s wheel that had thrown this man and me together so.

“I say he was selfish; and truly he did all he could in the years I was with him to drain me of my best strength of heart and brain, but some of his selfish ends seemed to lie in the way of my own ad-

vancement. Thus he had set his mind on my succeeding him in the governorship, or at least becoming Speaker, and to that end he had me elected to Althing, a legislative body very like to the House of Keys, violating thereby more than one regulation touching my age, nationality, and period of residence in Iceland. There he made his first great error in our relations, for while I was a servant in his house and office my mind and will were his, but when I became a delegate they became my own, in charge for the people who elected me.

“It would be a long story to tell you of all that occurred in the three years thereafter; how I saw many a doubtful scheme hatched under my eyes without having the power or right to protest while I kept the shelter of the Governor’s roof; how I left his house and separated from him; how I pursued my way apart from him, supported by good men who gathered about me; how he slandered and maligned and injured me through my father, whom all had known, and my mother, of whom I myself had told him; how in the end he

prompted the Danish Government to propose to Althing a new constitution for Iceland, curtailing her ancient liberties and violating her time-honoured customs, and how I led the opposition to this unworthy project and defeated it. The end of all is that within these two months Iceland has risen against the rule of Denmark as administered by Jorgen Jorgensen, driving him away, and that I, who little thought to sit in his place even in the days when he himself was plotting to put me there, and would have fled from the danger of pushing from his stool the man whose bread I had eaten, am at this moment president of a new Icelandic republic.

“It will seem to you a strange climax that I am where I am after so short a life here, coming as a youth and a stranger only four years ago, without a livelihood and with little money (though more I might perhaps have had), on a vague errand, scarcely able to speak the language of the people, and understanding it merely from the uncertain memories of childhood. And if above the pleasures of a true patriotism

—for I am an Icelander too, proud of the old country and its all but thousand years—there is a secret joy in my cup of fortune, the sweetest part of it is that there are those—there is one—in dear little Ellan Vannin who will, I truly think, rejoice with me and be glad. But I am too closely beset by the anxieties that have come with my success to give much thought to its vanities. Thus in this first lull after the storm of our revolution I have to be busy with many active preparations. Jorgen Jorgensen has gone to Copenhagen, where he will surely incite the Danish Government to reprisals, though a powerful State might well afford to leave to its freedom the ancient little nation that lives on a great rock of the frozen seas. In view of this certainty, I have to organise some native forces of defence, both on land and sea. One small colony of Danish colonists who took the side of the Danish powers has had to be put down by force, and I have removed the political prisoners from the gaol of Reykjavík, where they did no good, to the sulphur mines at Krisuvik, where they are opening an industry that

should enrich the State. So you see that my hands are full of anxious labour, and that my presence here seems necessary now. But if, as sanguine minds predict, all comes out well in the end, and Denmark leaves us to ourselves, or the powers of Europe rise against Denmark, and Iceland remains a free nation, I will not forget that my true home is in the dear island of the Irish Sea, and that good souls are there who remember me and would welcome me, and that one of them was my dear little playfellow long ago.

“And now, dear Greeba, you know what has happened to me since we parted on that sweet night at the gate of Lague, but I know nothing of all that has occurred to you. My neglect has been well punished by my ignorance and my many fears.

“How is your father? Is the dear man well, and happy, and prosperous? He must be so, or surely there is no Providence dispensing justice in this world.

“Are you well? To me the years have sent a tawny beard and a woful lantern jaw. Have they changed you greatly? Yet how can you answer such a question? Only say

that you are well, and have been always well, and I will know the rest, dear Greeba—that the four years past have only done what the preceding eight years did, in ripening the bloom of the sweetest womanhood, in softening the dark light of the most glorious eyes, and in smoothing the dimples of the loveliest face that ever the sun of heaven shone upon.

“But thinking of this, and trying to summon up a vision of you as you must be now, it serves me right that I am tortured by fears I dare not utter. What have you been doing all this time? Have you made any new friends? I have made many, yet none that seem to have got as close to me as the old ones are. One old friend, the oldest I can remember, though young enough yet for beauty and sweet grace, is still the closest to my heart. Do you know whom I mean? Greeba, do you remember your promise? You could hardly speak to make it. I had forgotten my manners so that I had left you little breath. Have you forgotten? To me it is a delicious memory, and if it is not a painful one to you, then all is well with both of us. But oh for the time

to come, when many a similar promise, and many a like breach of manners, will wipe away the thought of this one ! I am almost in love with myself to think it was I who stood with you by the bridge at Lague, and could find it in my heart, if it were only in my power, to kiss the lips that kissed you. I'll do better than that some day. What say you? But say nothing, for that's best, dearest. Ah, Greeba "——

At this point there was a break in the letter, and what came after was in a larger, looser, and more rapid handwriting.

"Your letter has this moment reached me. I am overwhelmed by the bad news you send me. Your father has not yet come. Did his ship sail for Reykjavík? Or was it for Hafnafiörd? Certainly it may have put in at the Orkneys, or the Faroes. But if it sailed a fortnight before you wrote it ought to be here now. I will make inquiries forthwith.

"I interrupted my letter to send a boat down the firth to look. It is gone. I can

see it now skirting the Smoky Harbour on its way to the Smoky Point. If your father comes back with it, he shall have a thousand, thousand welcomes. The dear good man—how well I remember that on the day I parted from him he rallied me on my fears, and said he would yet come here to see me! Little did he think to come like this. And the worst of his misfortunes have followed on his generousities! Such big-hearted men should have a store like the widow's cruse to draw from, that would grow no less, however often they dipped into it. God keep him till we meet again and I hold once more that hand of charity and blessing, or have it resting on my head.

“I am anxious on your account also, dearest Greeba, for I know too well what your condition must be in your mother's house. My dear girl, forgive me for what I send you with this letter. The day I left the island your father lent me fifty pounds, and now I repay it to his daughter. So it is not a gift, and, if it were, you should still take it from me, seeing there are no obligations among those who love.

“The duties that hold me here are now for the first time irksome, for I am longing for the chance of hastening to your side. But only say that I may do so with your consent and all that goes with it, and I will not lose a day more in sending a trustworthy person to you who shall bring you here to rejoin your father and me. Write by the first ship that will bring your letter. I shall not rest until I have heard from you; and having heard in such words as my heart could wish, I shall not sleep until you are with me, never, never to be parted from me again as long as life itself shall last. Write, dearest girl—write—write.”

Here there was another break in the letter, and then came this postscript:—

“It is part of the penalty of life in these northern lands that for nearly one half of the year we are entirely cut off from intercourse with the rest of the world, and are at the mercy of wind and sea for that benefit during the other half. My letter has waited these seven days for the passing of a storm before the ship that is to carry it can sail. This

interval has seen the return of the sloop that I sent down the firth as far as Smoky Point, but no tidings has she brought back of the vessel your father sailed in, and no certain intelligence has yet reached me from any other quarter. So let me not alarm you when I add that a report has come to Reykjavík by a whaler on the seas under Snaefell that an Irish schooner has lately been wrecked near the mouth of some basaltic caves by Seydisfiord, all hands being saved, but the vessel gone to pieces, and crew and passengers trying to make their way to the capital overland. I am afraid to fear, and as much afraid to hope, that this may have been the ship that brought your father; but I am fitting out an expedition to go along the coast to meet the poor shipbroken company, for whoever they are they can know little of the perils and privations of a long tramp across this desolate country. If more and better news should come my way you shall have it in its turn, but meantime bethink you earnestly whether it is not now for you to come and to join me, and your father also, if he should then be here, and, if not, to help me

to search for him. But it is barely just to you to ask so much without making myself clear, though truly you must have guessed my meaning. Then, dear Greeba, when I say 'Come,' I mean *Come to be my wife*. It sounds cold to say it so, and such a plea is not the one my heart has cherished; for through all these years I have heard myself whisper that dear word through trembling lips, with a luminous vision of my own face in your beautiful eyes before me. But that is not to be, save in an aftermath of love, if you will only let the future bring it. So, dearest love, my darling—more to me than place and power and all the world can give—come to me—come—come—come.”

CHAPTER V.

STRONG KNOTS OF LOVE.

Now, never did a letter bring more contrary feelings to man or maid than this one of Michael Sunlocks brought to Greeba. It thrilled her with love; it terrified her with fear; it touched her with delight; it chilled her with despair; it made her laugh; it made her weep; she kissed it with quivering lips; she dropped it from trembling fingers. But in the end it swept her heart and soul away with it, as it must have swept away the heart and soul of any maiden who ever loved, and she leaped at the thought that she must go to Sunlocks and to her father at once, without delay—not waiting to write, or for the messenger that was to come.

Yet the cooler moment followed, when she remembered Jason. She was pledged to him; she had given him her promise; and if she broke her word she would break his

heart. But Sunlocks—Sunlocks—Sunlocks! She could hear his low, passionate voice in the words of his letter. Jason she had loved for his love of her; but Sunlocks she had loved of her love alone.

What was she to do? Go to Sunlocks, and thereby break her word and the heart of Jason, or abide by Jason, and break her own heart and the hope of Sunlocks? “Oh,” she thought, “if the letter had but come a day earlier—one little day—nay, one hour—one little, little hour!” Then, in her tortured mind, she reproached Jason for keeping it back from her by his forgetfulness, and at the next instant she reproached Sunlocks for its tardy despatch, and last of all she reproached herself for not waiting for it. “Oh,” she thought, “was ever a girl born to bring such misery to those who love her!”

All the long night thereafter she tossed in restless doubt, never once closing her eyes in sleep; and at day-dawn she rose and dressed, and threw open her window, and cool waves of morning air floated down upon her from the mountains, where the bald crown of Barrule was tipped with rosy light

from the sun that was rising over the sea. Then, in the stillness of the morning, before the cattle in the meadows had begun to low, or the sheep on the hills to bleat, and there was yet no noise of work in the rickyard or the shipp, and all the moorland below lay asleep under its thin coverlet of mist, there came to her from across the fields the sound of a happy, cheery voice that was singing. She listened, and knew that it was Jason, chanting a song of Iceland after a night spent on the mountains; and she looked and saw that he was coming on towards the house, with his long swinging stride and leap, over gorse and cushag and hedge and ditch.

It was more than she could bear, after such night-long torment, to look upon the happiness she seemed about to wreck, so she turned her head away and covered her ears with her hands. But recking nothing of this, Jason came on, singing in snatches and whistling by turns, until his firm tread echoed in the paved courtyard in the silence that was broken by nothing beside, except the wakening of the rooks in the elms.

“She must be awake, for she lies there, and her window is open,” he thought to himself.

“Whisht!” he cried, tossing up a hand.

And then, without moving from where she stood, with her back resting against the window-shutter, she turned her head about and her eyes aslant, and saw him beneath her casement. He looked buoyant and joyous, and full of laughter. A gun was over his shoulder, a fishing-rod was in the other hand, at his belt hung a brace of birds, with the blood dripping on to his leggings, and across his back swung a little creel.

“Greeba, whisht!” he called again, in a loud whisper; and a third time he called her.

Then, though her heart smote her sore, she could not but step forward; and perhaps her very shame made her the more beautiful at that moment, for her cheeks were rosy red, and her round neck drooped, and her eyes were shy of the morning light, and very sweet she looked to the lad who loved her there.

“Ah!” he said almost inaudibly, and drew a long breath. Then he made pretence to kiss her, though so far out of reach, and

laughed in his throat. After that he laid his gun against the porch, and untied the birds and threw them down at the foot of the closed door.

"I thought I would bring you these," he said. "I've just shot them."

"Then you've not been to bed," said Greeba nervously.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said, laughing. "Nothing for me. Besides, how could I sleep? Sleep? Why I should have been ready to kill myself this morning if I could have slept last night. Greeba!"

"Well!"

"You could never think what a glorious night it has been for me."

"So you've had good sport?" she said, feeling ashamed.

"Sport!" he cried, and laughed again. "Oh yes, I've had sport enough," he said. "But what a night it was! The happiest night of all my life. Every star that shone seemed to shine for me; every wind that blew seemed to bring me a message; and every bird that sang, as the day was dawning, seemed to sing the song of all my happi-

ness. Oh, it has been a triumphant night, Greeba."

She turned her head away from him, but he did not stop.

"And this morning, coming down from Barrule, everything seemed to speak to me of one thing, and that was the dearest thing in all the world. 'Dear little river,' I said, 'how happily you sing your way to the sea.' And then I remembered that before it got there it would turn the wheel for us at Porty-Vullin some day, and so I said, 'Dear little mill, how merrily you'll go when I listen to your plash and plunge, with her I love beside me.'"

She did not speak, and after a moment he laughed.

"That's very foolish, isn't it?" he said.

"Oh no," she said. "Why foolish?"

"Well it sounds so; but, ah, last night the stars around me on the mountain top seemed like a sanctuary, and this morning the birds among the gorse were like a choir, and all sang together, and away to the roof their word rang out—Greeba! Greeba! Greeba!"

He could hear a faint sobbing.

"Greeba!"

"Yes!"

"You are crying."

"Am I? Oh no! No, Jason, not that."

"I must go. What a fool I am," he muttered, and picked up his gun.

"Oh no; don't say that."

"Greeba!"

"Well, Jason?"

"I'm going now, but"——

"Why?"

"I'm not my own man this morning. I'm talking foolishly."

"Well, and do you think a girl doesn't like foolishness?"

He threw his head back and laughed at the blue sky. "But I'm coming back for you in the evening. I am to get the last of my rafters on to-day, and when a building is raised it's a time to make merry."

He laughed again with a joyous lightness, and turned to go, and she waved her hand to him as he passed out of the gate. Then, one, two, three, four, his strong rhythmic steps went off behind the elms, and then he was gone, and the early sun was gone with

him, for its brightness seemed to have died out of the air.

And being alone Greeba knew why she had tried to keep Jason by her side, for while he was with her the temptation was not strong to break in upon his happiness, but when he was no longer there, do what she would she could not but remember Michael Sunlocks.

“Oh, what have I done that two brave men should love me?” she thought; but none the less for that her heart clamoured for Sunlocks, Sunlocks, Sunlocks, always Sunlocks, the Sunlocks of her childhood, her girlhood, her first womanhood—Sunlocks of the bright eyes and the smile like sunshine.

And thinking again of Jason, and his brave ways, and his simple manly bearing, and his plain speech so strangely lifted out of itself that day into words with wings, she only told herself that she was about to break his heart, and that to see herself do it would go far to break her own. So she decided that she would write to him, and then slip away as best she could, seeing him no more.

At that resolve she sat and wrote four pages of pleading and prayer and explanation. But having finished her letter, it smote her suddenly, as she folded and sealed it, that it would be a selfish thing to steal away without warning, and leave this poor paper behind her to crush Jason, for though written in pity for him, in truth it was fraught with pity only for herself. As mean of soul as that she could not be, and straightway she threw her letter aside, resolved to tell her story face to face. Then she remembered the night of Stephen Orry's death, and the white lips of Jason as he stood above the dying man—his father whom he had crossed the seas to slay—and again, by a quick recoil, she recalled his laughter of that morning, and she said within herself, "If I tell him, he will kill me."

But that thought decided her, and she concluded that tell him she must, let happen what would.

So partly in the strength of her resolve, and partly out of its womanly weakness, and the fear that she might return to her first plan at last, she took up her own letter to

Jason, and locked it in a chest. Then taking from the folds at her breast the letter of Sunlocks to herself, she read it again and yet again, for it was the only love-letter she had ever received, and there was a dear delight in the very touch of it. But the thought of that sensuous joy smote her conscience when she remembered what she had still to do, and thinking that she could never speak to Jason, eye to eye, with the letter of Sunlocks lying warm in her bosom, she took it out and locked it also in the chest.

Jason came back at sundown to fetch her away that they might make some innocent sport together because his mill was roofed. Then with her eyes on her feet she spoke, and he listened in a dull impassive silence, while all the laughter died off his face and a look of blank pallor came over it. And when she had finished, she waited for the blow of his anger, but it did not come.

"Then all is over between us," he said with an effort.

And looking up, she saw that he was a forlorn man in a moment, and fell to her knees before him with many pitiful prayers

for forgiveness. But he only raised her and said gently—

“Mistress Greeba, maybe I haven’t loved you enough?”

“No, no,” she cried.

“I’m only a rough and ignorant fellow, a sort of wild man, I dare say, not fit to touch the hand of a lady, and maybe a lady could never stoop to me.”

“No, no, there’s not a lady in all the world would stoop if she were to marry you.”

“Then maybe I’ve vexed you by finding my own advantage in your hour of need.”

“No, you have behaved bravely with me in my trouble.”

“Then, Greeba, tell me what has happened since yesterday.”

“Nothing—everything. Jason, I have wronged you. It is no fault of yours, but now I know I do not love you.”

He turned his face away from her, and when he spoke again his voice broke in his throat.

“You could never think how fast and close my love will grow. Let us wait,” he said.

"It would be useless," she answered.

"Stay," he said stiffly, "do you love any one else?"

But before she had time to speak, he said quickly, "Wait! I've no right to ask that question, and I will not hear you answer it."

"You are very noble, Jason," she said.

"I was thinking of myself," he said.

"Jason," she cried, "I meant to ask you to release me, but you have put me to shame, and now I ask you to choose for me. I have promised myself to you, and if you wish it I will keep my promise."

At that he stood, a sorrowful man, beside her for a moment's space before he answered her, and only the tones of his voice could tell how much his answer cost him.

"No—ah, no," he said; "no, Greeba, to keep your promise to me would be too cruel to you."

"Think of yourself now," she cried.

"There's no need to do that," he said, "for either way I am a broken man. But you shall not also be broken-hearted, and neither shall the man who parts us."

Saying this, a ghastly white hand seemed

to sweep across his face, but at the next moment he smiled feebly and said, "God bless you both."

Then he turned to go, but Greeba caught him by both hands.

"Jason," she murmured, "it is true I cannot love you, but if there was another name for love that is not"——

He twisted back to her as she spoke, and his face was unutterably mournful to see. "Don't look at me like that," he said, and drew away.

She felt her face flush deep, for she was ashamed. Love was her pole-star. What was Jason's? Only the blankness of despair.

"Oh, my heart will break," she cried. "Jason," she cried again, and again she grasped his hands, and again their eyes met, and then the brave girl put her quivering lips to his.

"Ah, no," he said in a husky voice, and he broke from her embrace.

CHAPTER VI.

ESAU'S BITTER CRY.

SHRINKING from every human face, Jason turned in his dumb despair towards the sea, for the moan of its long dead waves seemed to speak to him in a voice of comfort if not of cheer. The year had deepened to autumn, and the chill winds that scattered the salt spray, the white curves of the breakers, the mists, the dapple-grey clouds, the scream of the sea-fowl, all suited with his mood, for at the fountains of his own being the great deeps were broken up.

It was Tuesday, and every day thereafter until Saturday he haunted the shore, the wild headland to seaward, and the lonesome rocks on the south. There bit by bit the strange and solemn idea of unrequited love was borne in upon him. It was very hard to understand. For one short day the image of a happy love had stood up before his

mind, but already that day was dead. That he should never again clasp her hand whom he loved, that all was over between them—it was painful, it was crushing.

And oh! it was very cruel. His life seemed as much ended as if he had taken his death-warrant, for life without hope was nothing worth. The future he had fondly built up for both of them lay broken at his own feet. Oh, the irony of it all! There were moments when evil passions arose in his mind and startled him. Standing at the foot of the lone crags of the sea he would break into wild peals of laughter, or shriek out in rebellion against his sentence. But he was ashamed of these impulses, and would slink away from the scene of them, though no human ear had heard him, like a dog that is disgraced.

Yet he felt that like a man among men he could fight anything but this relentless doom. Anything, anything—and he would not shrink. Life and love, life and love—only these, and all would be well. But no, ah! no, not for him was either; and creeping up in the dead of night towards Lague, just

that his eyes might see, though sorrow dimmed them, the house where she lay asleep, the strong man would sob like a woman, and cry out "Greeba! Greeba! Greeba!"

But with the coming of day his strength would return, and watching the big ships outside pass on to north and south, or listening to the merry song of the seamen who weighed anchor in the bay, he told himself sadly but without pain that his life in the island was ended, that he could not live where she lived, surrounded by the traces of her presence, that something called him away, and that he must go. And having thus concluded his spirits rose, and he decided to stay until after Sunday, thinking to see her then in church, and there take his last tender look of her, and bid her farewell in silence, for he could not trust himself to speak.

So he passed what remained of his time until then without bitterness or gloom, saying within himself as often as he looked with bereaved eyes towards Lague, where it lay in the sunshine, "Live on, and be happy,

for I wish you no ill. Live on, and the memory of all this will pass away."

But he did not in the meantime return to his work at the mill, which stood as he had left it on the Tuesday when the carpenter fixed the last of its roof timbers. This, with the general rupture of his habits of life, was the cause of sore worry and perplexity to his housemate.

"Aw, reglar bruk — bruk complete," old Davy said far and wide. "A while ago ye couldn' hould him for workin' at the mill, and now he's never puttin' a sight on it, and good goold waitin' for him; and showin' no pride—and what he's thinkin' of no one's knowin'."

Davy tried hard to sound the depth of Jason's trouble, but having no line to fathom it he had recourse to his excellent fancy.

"Aw, bless yer sows, the thick as a had-dick I was," he whispered one day, "and me wonderin' why, and wonderin' why, and the thing as plain as plain what's agate of the poor boy. It's divils that's took at him—divils in the head. Aw, yes, and two of them, for it's aisy to see there's fightin' goin'

on inside of him. Aw, yes, same as they tell of in Revelations ; and I've seen the like when I was sailin' forrin."

Having so concluded, old Davy thought it his duty to consult an old body that lived in a dark tangle of birchwood at Ballaglass.

"It's fit to make a man cry to see the way he's goin'," said he, "and a few good words can't do no harm any way."

The old woman agreed with Davy as to the cause of trouble, and said that Jason must be somebody after all, since what he had was a malady the quality was much subject to ; for to her own knowledge the "Clerk o' the Rowls" had suffered from it when a little dancing girl from France had left suddenly for England. Yet she made no question but she should cure him, if Davy could contrive to hang about his neck while he slept a piece of red ribbon which she would provide.

It was not easy for Davy to carry out his instructions, so little did Jason rest, but he succeeded at length, and thought he remarked that Jason became calmer and better straightway.

“But, bless me, I was wrong,” said he. “It was four divils the poor boy had in his head; and two of them are gone, but the other two are agate of him still.”

When Sunday morning came Jason made himself ready for church, and then lounged at the doorway of old Davy’s cottage by the dial, to watch the people go in at the gate. And many hailed him as they went by in the sweet sunshine, and some observed among themselves that in a few days his face had grown thin. In twos and threes they passed, while Davy rang the bell from the open porch, and though Jason seemed not to heed any of them, yet he watched them one by one. Matt Mylchreest he saw, and Nary Crowe, now toothless and saintly, and Kane Wade, who had trudged down from Ballure, and his wife Bridget, grown wrinkled and yellow, and some bright young maidens, too, who gave a side-long look his way, and John Fairbrother—Gentleman John—who tripped along with silken bows on the toes of his shoes. But one whom he looked for he did not see, and partly from fear that she might not come,

and partly from dread lest she should pass him so closely by, he shambled into church with the rest before the bell had stopped.

He had not often been to church during the four years that he had lived on the island, and the people made way for him as he pushed up into a dark corner under the gallery. There he sat and watched as before out of his slow eyes, never shifting their quiet gaze from the door of the porch. But the bell stopped and Greeba had not come; and when parson Gell hobbled up to the Communion rail, still Greeba was not there. Then the service was begun, the door was closed, and Jason lay back and shut his eyes.

The prayers were said without Jason hearing them, but while the first lesson was being read his wandering mind was suddenly arrested. It was the story of Jacob and Esau; how Isaac, their father, seeing the day of his death at hand, sent Esau for venison, that he might eat and bless him before he died; how Jacob under the person of Esau obtained the blessing, and how Esau vowed to slay his brother Jacob.

“And Isaac, his father, said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau.

“And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed?

“And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

“And Isaac, his father, answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above;

“And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

“And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning^e for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.”

As Parson Gell at the reading-desk mumbled these words through his toothless gums, it seemed to Jason as though he were awakening from a long sleep—a sleep of four years, a sleep full of dreams, both sweet and sad—and that everything was coming back upon him in a dizzy whirl. He remembered his mother, her cruel life, her death, and his own vow, and so vivid did these recollections grow in a moment that he trembled with excitement.

A woman in a black crape bonnet, who sat next to him in the pew, saw his emotion, and put a Bible into his hands. He accepted it with a slight movement of the head, but when he tried to find the place he turned dizzy and his hands shook. Seeing this the good woman, with a look of pity and a thought of her runaway son who was far off, took the Bible back, and after opening it at the chapter in Genesis, returned it in silence. Even then he did not read, but sat with wandering eyes, while nervous twitches crossed his face.

He was thinking that he had forgotten his great vow of vengeance, lulled to sleep by

his vain dream of love; he was telling himself that his vow must yet be fulfilled, or his mother, who had urged him to it, would follow him with her curse from her grave. For some minutes this feeling grew more and more powerful, and more and more his limbs and whole body quivered. The poor woman in the crape saw that he trembled, and leaned towards him and asked if he was ill. But he only shook his head and drew back in silence into the corner of the pew.

"I must be going mad," he thought, and to steady his mind he turned to the book, thinking to follow the old parson as he lisped along.

It was a reference Bible that the woman had lent him, and as his eyes rambled over the page, never resting until they alit on the words, *Then will I slay my brother Jacob*, he shuddered and thought "How hideous!" All at once he marked the word *slay* in the margin with many references to it, and hardly knowing what he was doing he turned up the first of them. From that moment his senses were in a turmoil, and he knew nothing clearly of all that was being done

about him. He thought he saw that through all ages God had made man the instrument of His vengeance on the wrongdoer. The stories of Moses, of Saul, of Samson, came back to him one by one, and as he read a chill terror filled his whole being.

He put the book down, trying to compose himself, and then he thought, "How childish ! God is king of earth and heaven, and needs the help of no man." But his nervous fingers could not rest ; and he took up the Bible again, while the parson prosed through his short sermon. This time he turned away from the passages that haunted him, though "Esau, Esau, Esau," rang in his head. Rolling the leaves in his hand he read in one place how the Lord visits His vengeance upon the children for the sins of the fathers, and then in another place how the nearest of kin to him that is killed shall avenge the blood spilt, and then again in yet another place how if man keep not his covenant with the Lord, the Lord will send a faintness upon him, and a great and woful trembling, so that the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase him.

"Am I then afraid?" he asked himself, and shut the book once more. His head swam with vague thoughts. "I must keep my vow," he thought. "I am losing my senses," he thought again. "I am an Esau," he thought once more.

Then he looked around the church, and if he had seen Greeba at that moment, the fire of his heart would have burnt itself out, and all thought of his vow would have gone from him as it had gone before. He did not see her, but he remembered her, and his soul died away.

The service came to an end, and he strode off, turning from every face; but John Fairbrother tripped after him on the road, touched him on the arm, looked up at him with a smirk, and said—

"Then you don't know where she is?"

"Who?" said Jason.

"Then you *don't* know, eh?" said John, with a meaning look.

"Who d'ye mean?—Greeba?"

"Just so. She's gone, though I warrant it's fetching coals to Newcastle to tell you so."

Hearing that, Jason pushed Gentleman John out of his way with a lunge that sent the dandy reeling, and bounded off towards Lague.

"Aw, well," muttered John, "you'd really think he *didn't* know."

The woman in crape who had followed Jason out of the church, thinking to speak to him, said, "Lave him alone. It's the Spirit of the Lord that's strivin' with him."

And old Davy, who came up at the moment, said, "Divils, ma'am—divils in the head."

When Jason got to Lague he found the other Fairbrothers assembled there. Asher had missed Greeba the night before, and on rising late that morning—Sunday morning—he had so far conquered his laziness as to walk round to his brothers' houses and inquire for her. All six, except John, had then trudged back to Lague, thinking in their slow way to start a search, and they began their quest by ransacking Greeba's room. There they found two letters that had been locked in a chest, and clearly forgotten in a hasty leave-taking. One of them

was Greeba's abandoned letter to Red Jason, the other was the letter of Michael Sunlocks to Greeba. The Fairbrothers read both with grim wonderment, and Jacob put Greeba's letter in his pocket. They were discussing the letter of Sunlocks as Jason entered; and they fell back at sight of his ashy face and the big beads of sweat that dropped from it.

"What's this? Where is she?" he said, and his powerful voice shook.

Without a word they handed him the letter, and he glanced it over and turned it in his hands, like one who does not see or cannot read.

"Where is she?" he said again, lifting his helpless eyes to the faces about him.

"The devil knows," said Jacob; "but see—read—'Michael Sunlocks,'" running his finger along the signature.

At that a groan like the growl of a beast came from Jason's throat, and like a baited dog he looked around, not yet knowing on whom his wrath should fasten.

"It's very simple. It's plain to see that she has gone to him," said Jacob.

"What," said Thurstan, "and did ye

never hear the for and the how he useder come coorting from Castletown over?"

"Aw, it's a true saying," said Asher, "there's a bit of the divil in every girl."

"Och," said Thurstan, "it's stupid surprising he's been."

And then Jason's face was crossed by a ghastly smile.

"Oh, I'm a woman of a man," he muttered, looking stupidly down at the paper in his hand. "A poor-spirited fool," he muttered again. "I must be so, God knows." But at the next moment his white face grew blood red, and he cried, "My curse upon him," and with that he tossed back the letter and swung out of the house.

He went on to Port-y-Vullin, mounted the new mill, threw down the roof rafters, and every wall that they had rested upon, until not one stone was left above another, and the house, so near completion, was only a heap of ruins. Then he went into the old hut, took up his treasures and flung them out to sea.

Meantime, the six Fairbrothers were putting their heads together.

"President!" said Thurstan; "that's as good as Governor-General."

"The deuce!" said John.

"She'll be rich," said Ross. "I always said she was fit for a lady."

"Hum! We've made a mess of it," said Stean.

"Well, you wouldn't take my advice," said Asher. "I was for treating the girl fair."

"Stay," said Jacob, "it's not yet too late."

"Well, what's to be done?" said the others together.

"Go after her," said Jacob.

"Ah!"

"Hum! Listen! This is what we had better do," said Jacob. "Sell Ballacraïne and take her the money, and tell her we never meant to keep it from her."

"That's good," said John.

"A Governor-General has pickings, I can tell you," said Jacob.

"But who'll go?" said Asher.

"Go? Hum! What? The deuce! Well, I mightn't refuse to go myself," said Jacob.

"And maybe I wouldn't mind going with you," said John.

And so it was settled. But the other four said to themselves, "What about the pickings?" and then each, of himself, concluded secretly that if Jacob and John went to Iceland, Jacob and John would get all that was to be got by going, and that to prevent such cheating it would be necessary to go with them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOKE OF JACOB.

JASON paid the last of his debts in the Isle of Man, and then set sail for Iceland with less money in his pocket than Adam Fairbrother had carried there. He knew nothing of the whereabouts or condition of the man he was going to seek, except that Michael Sunlocks was at Reykjavík; for so much, and no more, he had read of the letter that the Fairbrothers put into his hands at Lague. The ship he first sailed by was a trader between Copenhagen and the greater ports of Scotland and Ireland, but at the Danish capital he secured a passage in a whaler bound for Reykjavík. His double voyage covered more than six weeks, though there was a strong fair wind from the coast of Scotland to the coast of Denmark, and again from Denmark to Iceland. The delay fretted him, for his heart was afire;

but there was no help for it, and he had to submit. He did so with no cheer of spirit, or he might have learned something from the yarns of the seamen. All the gossip that came his way was a chance remark of the master, a Dane, who one day stopped in front of him as he lay by the hatches, and asked if he was an Icelander born. He answered that he was. Was he a sea-going man? Yes. Shipbroken, maybe, in some foreign country? That was so. How long had he been away from Iceland? Better than four years.

“You’ll see many changes since that time,” said the master. “Old Iceland is turned topsy-turvy.”

Jason understood this to mean some political revolution, and turned a deaf ear to it, for such things seemed but sorry trifling to one with work like his before him.

They had then just sighted the Westmann Islands, through a white sea vapour, and an hour later they lay three miles off a rocky point, while an open boat came out to them over the rough water from the island called Home.

It was the post-boat of that desolate rock, fetching letters from the mainland, and ready to receive them from Denmark. The postman was little and old, and his name was Patriksen.

"Well, Patriksen, and what's the latest from the old country?" sang out the master, after two newspapers had been thrown down and one letter taken up.

"Why, and haven't you heard it?" shouted the postman.

"What's that?" cried the master.

"They've put up the young Manxman," shouted the postman. "I knew his father," he added, and laughed mockingly, as he bent to the oars and started back with his newspapers over his three miles of tumbling sea.

Jason's mind threw off its torpor at the sound of those words. While the boat lay alongside he leaned over the gunwale and listened eagerly. When it sheered off he watched it until it had faded into the fog. Then he turned to the master and was about to ask a question, but quickly recovered himself and was silent. "Better not," he

thought. "It would be remembered when all should be over."

Late the same day they came for the first time in full view of the south-east coast of Iceland. The fog had lifted before a strong breeze from the west, where the red sun was dipping into the sea. They were then by the needles of Portland, side on to the vast arch which the heavy blow of the tides of ten thousand years has beaten out of the rock. At the sea's edge were a hundred jagged prongs of burnt crag, flecked with the white wings and echoing with the wild cry of countless seabirds; behind that was a plain of lava dust for sea-beach; farther back the dome of a volcano, lying asleep under its coverlet of snow; still farther a grey glacier, glistening with silver spikes; and beyond all a black jökull, Wilderness-jökull, torn by many earthquakes, seamed and streaked with the unmelted ice of centuries, and towering over a stony sea of desert, untrodden yet by the foot of man.

Desolate as the scene was, Jason melted at the sight of it; for this island, born of fire and frost, stood to him as the only place

in God's wide world that he could call his home, and little as it had done for him, less than nothing as he owed to it, yet it was his native land, and in coming back to its bleak and terrible shores he looked upon it with a thrill of the heart and saw it through his tears.

But he had little time and less desire to give way to tender feelings, and very soon he had small need to steel himself to the work before him, for everything served to spur him on to it. This was Iceland. This was the new home of Michael Sunlocks. This was where his mother had starved. This was where *she* had fled to who had wronged him sorely.

Early the next day they rounded the Smoky Point, leaving the Old Man crag under its shocks of foam to the right, and the rock called the Mealsack, under its white cloud of seagulls, to the left, and began to beat down the firth towards Reykjavík. It was not yet six o'clock—the Icelandic mid-evening—when they cast anchor inside the little island of Engy: but the year was far worn towards winter, and the night of the northern land had closed down.

And the time having come to leave the whaler, Jason remembered that he had been but a moody companion for his shipmates, though they had passed some perilous days and nights together. So he bade them good-bye with what cheer he could summon up at last, and the rough fellows kissed him after the manner of their people, showing no rancour at all but only pity, and saying among themselves that it was plain to see he had known trouble and, though given to strange outbursts when alone, was as simple and as gentle as a child, and would never hurt a fly.

He had hailed a passing boat to run him ashore, and it was one of the light skiffs with the double prow that the boys of Iceland use when they hunt among the rocks for the eggs and down of the eider duck. Such indeed, though so late in the season, had that day been the work of the two lads whose boat he had chanced upon, and having dropped down to their side from the whaler with his few belongings—his long coat of Manx homespun over his arm, his seaman's boots across his shoulders, his English fowling-piece in his hand and his

pistol in his belt—he began to talk with them of their calling as one who knew it.

“Where have you been working, my lads?” said Jason.

“Out on Engy,” said the elder of the boys.

“Found much?”

“Not to-day.”

“Who cleans it?”

“Mother.”

And at that a frown passed over Jason’s face in the darkness. The boys were thinly clad, both were bare-legged and bare-footed. Plainly they were brothers, one of them being less than twelve years of age, and the other as young as nine.

“What’s your father?”

“Father’s dead,” said the lad.

“Where do you live with your mother?”

“Down on the shore yonder, below the silversmith’s.”

“The little house behind the Mission, in front of the vats?”

“Yes, sir; do you know it?”

“I was born in it, my lad,” said Jason sadly; and he thought to himself, “Then the old mother is dead.”

But he also thought of his own mother, and her long years of worse than widowhood. "All that has yet to be paid for," he told himself with a cold shudder, and then he remembered that he had just revealed himself.

"See, my lads," he said, "here is a crown for you, and say nothing of who gave it you."

The little Icelandic capital twinkled low at the water's edge, and as they came near to it Jason saw that there was a flare of torch-lights and open fires, with dark figures moving busily before the glow, where he looked for the merchant stores that had faced the sea.

"What's this?" he asked.

"The fort that the new Governor is throwing up," said the boy.

Then through a number of smacks, some schooners, a brig, and many small boats, they ran in at the little wooden jetty that forked out over a reef of low rocks. And there some idlers who sat on casks under the lamp, with their hands in their pockets and their skin caps squashed down on their foreheads, seemed to recognise Jason as he landed.

"Lord bless me," said one with a look of terror, "it's the dead come to life again."

"God a-mercy me," said another, pausing with his snuff at his nose, "I could have sworn I fetched him a dead man out of the sea."

Jason knew them, but before they had so far regained their self-command as to hail to him, he had faced about, though eager to ask many questions, and walked away. "Better not," he thought, and hurried on.

He took the High Street towards the inn, and then an irregular alley that led past the lake to a square in front of the Cathedral, and ended at a little house of lava blocks that nestled at its feet, for it was there he meant to lodge. It had been the home of a worthy couple whom he had known in the old days, caretakers of the Cathedral, and his mother's only friends in her last days. Old and feeble and very deaf they had both been then, and as he strode along in the darkness, he wondered if he should find them still alive. He found them as he had left them: not otherwise changed than if the five years of his absence had been but five hours. The

old man was still at the hearth chopping up some logs of driftwood, and the old woman was still at the table ironing her linen by the light of a rush candle. With uplifted hands and cries of wonderment they received him, and while he supped on the porridge and skyr that they set before him they talked and questioned.

“And where have you been this many a day?” said the old man.

“In England, Scotland, Denmark—many places,” said Jason.

“Well, they’ve buried you these four years and better,” said the old man, with a grimace.

“Lord bless me, yes, love; and a cross over your grave too, and your name on it,” said the old woman, with a look of awe.

“Who did that?” said Jason.

“Jorgen Jorgensen,” said the old man, grinning.

“It’s next to your mother’s, love. He did that, too, for when he heard that she was gone he repented,” said the old woman.

“It’s no good folks repenting when their bad work’s done, and done with,” said the old man.

"That's what I say. There's them above that won't call it repenting. And see what has come of it," said the old woman.

"What?" said Jason.

"Why, he has gone. Didn't you know, love?" said the old woman.

"How gone?" said Jason. "Dead?"

"Worse—disgraced—driven out of Iceland," said the old man.

Then an ugly smile crossed Jason's face. "It is the beginning," he thought.

"But the old mother is dead, is she not?" he said aloud.

"Your father's mother? Old Mother Orryson?" said the old woman.

"No such luck," the old man muttered. "Comes to service every morning, the old sinner."

"But there's another family living in her house," said Jason.

"Oh, that's because she's past her work, and the new Governor keeps her," said the old man. "No news of your father, though," he added, with a shrug, and then there was a silence for some minutes.

"Poor Rachel," said the old woman pre-

sently. "Now *there* was a good creature. And, bless me, how she was wrapped up in her boy! I was just like that when I had my poor little Olaf. I never had but one child neither. Well, my lad," she said, dropping her flat-iron and raising her apron, "you can say you had a good mother anyhow."

Jason finished his supper and went out into the town. All thoughts, save one thought, had been banished from his mind. Where was this Michael Sunlocks? What was he? How was he to be met with? "Better not ask," thought Jason. "Wait and watch." And so he walked on. Dark as was the night, he knew every step of the way. The streets looked smaller and meaner than he remembered them, and yet they showed an unwonted animation. Oil lamps hung over many stalls, the stores were still open, and people passed to and fro in little busy throngs. Recalling the heavy quiet of that hour of night five years ago, Jason said to himself, "The town has awakened from a long sleep."

To avoid the glances of prying eyes, he turned down towards the bridge, passing the Deanery and the Bishop's house. There the

streets were all but as quiet as of old, the windows showed few lights, and the monotonous chime of the sea came up through the silence from the iron-bound shore. Yet, even there, from two houses, there were sounds of work. These were the Latin school and the gaol. In the school a company of students was being drilled by a sergeant, whose words of command rang out in the intervals of shuffling feet.

“What does this mean?” said Jason to a group of young girls, who with shawls over their heads, were giggling together in the darkness by the gate.

“It’s the regiment started by the new Governor,” said one of the girls.

“The new Governor again,” thought Jason, and turned away.

From the jail there came a noise as of carpenters hammering.

“What are they doing there?” said Jason to a little tailor, who passed him on the street at that moment with his black bag on his back.

“Turning the jail into a house for the new Governor,” said the tailor.

"Again the new Governor," said Jason, and he strode on by the tailor's side. "A stirring fellow, whoever he may be."

"That's true, young as he is," said the tailor.

"Is he then so young?" said Jason carelessly.

"Four or five and twenty, hardly more," said the tailor, "but with a head-piece fit for fifty. He has driven those Danish thieves out of the old country, with all their trick and truck. Why, you couldn't call your bread your own—no, nor your soul neither. Oh, a Daniel, sir—a young Daniel. He's to be married soon. She's staying with old Bishop John now. They say she's a foreigner."

"Who?" said Jason.

"Why, his wife that is to be," said the tailor. "Good night, sir," he cried, and turned down an alley.

Then Jason remembered Greeba, and the hot blood tingled in his cheeks. Never yet for an instant had it come to him to think that Michael Sunlocks and the new Governor were the same man, and that Greeba and his

bride were one. But, telling himself that she might even then be in that little town, with nothing but the darkness hiding him from her sight, he shuddered at the near chance of being discovered by her, and passed on by the river towards the sea. Yet, being alone there, with only the wash of the waves for company, he felt his great resolve begin to pall, as a hundred questions rose to torment him. Suppose she were here, and they were to meet, dare he after all do *that*? Though she loved this man, could he still do *that*? Oh, was it not horrible to think of—that he should cross the seas for *that*?

So to put an end to the torture of such questionings, and escape from himself, he turned back from the shore to where the crowds looked thickest in the town. He went as he came, by the bank of the river, and when he was crossing the bridge some one shot past him on a horse. It was a man, and he drew up sharply at the Bishop's house, threw his reins over the pier of the gate, and bounded into the house with the light foot that goes with a light heart. "The new Governor," thought Jason, though he

had seen him only as a shadow. "Who is he, I wonder?" he thought again, and with a sigh for his own condition within sight of this man's happiness he pushed heavily along.

Hardly had he got back into the town when he was seen and recognised, for with a whoop and a spring and a jovial oath a tipsy companion of former days came sweeping down upon him from the open door of a drinking-shop.

"What? Jason? Bless my soul! Come in," the fellow cried, embracing him; and to avoid the curious gaze of the throng that had gathered on the pavement, Jason allowed himself to be led into the house.

"Well, God save us! So you're back! But I heard you had come. Old Jón Olafsson told us. He was down at the jetty. Boys," the fellow shouted to a little company of men who sat drinking in the hot parlour, "he's another Lazarus, come back from the dead."

"Here's to his goot healt, den," said a fat Dutch captain, who sat on the hearth, strumming a fiddle to tune it.

And while the others laughed and drank, a little deformed dwarf in a corner with an accordion between his twisted fingers began to play and sing.

"This is the last thing that should have happened," thought Jason, and with many excuses he tried to elbow his way out. But the tipsy comrade held him while he rattled on.

"Been away—foreign, eh? Married since? No? Then the girls of old Iceland are best, eh? What? Yes? And old Iceland's the fairest land the sun shines upon, eh? No? But, Lord bless me, what a mess you made of it by going away just when you did!"

At that Jason, while pushing his way through, turned about with a look of inquiry.

"Didn't know it? What? That after the mother died old Jorgen went about looking for you? No? Wanted? Why, to make a man of you, boy. Make you his son and the like of that, and not too soon either. And when he couldn't find you he took up with this Michael Sunlocks."

"Michael Sunlocks?" Jason repeated in a distant sort of voice.

“Just so ; this precious new Governor that wants to put down all the drinking.”

“The new Governor?”

“Yes. Put *your* nose out, boy ; for that was the start of his luck.”

Jason felt dizzy, and under the hard tan of his skin his face grew white.

“You should know him, though. No? Well, after old Jorgen had quarrelled with him, everybody said he was a kind of bastard brother of yours.”

The reeking place had got hotter and hotter. It was now stifling, and Jason stumbled out into the street.

So Michael Sunlocks was the new Governor, and Michael Sunlocks was about to be married to Greeba. Thrice had this man robbed him of his blessing, standing in the place that ought to have been his ; once with his father, once with Greeba, and once again with Jorgen Jorgensen.

He tried to reckon it all up, but do what he would he could not keep his mind from wandering. The truth had fallen upon him at a blow, and under his strong emotions his faculties seemed to be slain in a moment.

He felt blind and deaf, and unable to think. Presently, without knowing where he was going, but impelled by some blind force, and staggering along like a drunken man, he found himself approaching the Bishop's house.

"He is there," he thought: "the man who has stood in my place all his days: the man who has stripped me of every good thing in life. He is there, in honour, and wealth, and happiness; and I am here, a homeless outcast in the night. Oh, that I could do it now—now—now!"

But at that he remembered that he had never yet seen Michael Sunlocks, to know him from another man. "I must wait," he thought. "I must go to work cautiously. I must see him first, and watch him."

The night was then far spent towards midnight; the streets had grown quiet, the lights of the town no longer sent a yellow glare over the grass-clad housetops, and from a quiet sky the moon and stars shone out.

Jason was turning back towards his lodg-

ings when he heard a voice that made him stand. It was a woman's voice singing, and it came with the undertones of some string instrument from the house in front of him. After a moment he pushed the gate open and walked across the little grass plat until he came beneath the only window from which light still shone. There he stopped and listened, laying his hand on the sill to steady himself.

Ah! now he knew the voice too well. It was Greeba's. She was there; she was on the other side of that wall at that instant. And she was singing. It was a love-song that she sang. Her very heart seemed to speak in it, for her tones were the tones of love, and *he* must be beside her.

"It is for him she has left me," thought Jason, in the whirl of his dazed brain; "for him and his place, his station, and the pride of his success."

Then, remembering how his love of this woman had fooled him through five treacherous years, turning him aside from thoughts of his vow, giving him his father's money for his mother's wrongs, and how she who

had been so dear to him had drawn him on in the days of her trouble, and cast him off when another beckoned to her, he cried in his tortured heart. "Oh, God in heaven, give me this man into my hands."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SWORD OF ESAU.

JASON went back to his lodging by the Cathedral, found the old caretaker sitting up for him, made some excuse for returning late, and turned in to bed. His room was the guest-chamber—a little, muggy, stifling box, with bed and bedding of eider-down sewed into canvas sacks. He threw off his boots and lay down in his clothes. Hour followed hour and he did not sleep. He was nevertheless not wholly awake, but retained a sort of sluggish consciousness which his dazed brain could not govern. Twelve had chimed from the great clock of the turret overhead as he lay down, and he heard one, two, three, and four follow in their turn. By this time he was feeling a dull pain at the back of his head, and a heavy throbbing in his neck. Until then he had been ever a man of great bodily strength, with never an ache or ailment.

“I am making myself ill before anything is done,” he thought, “and if I fall sick nothing can come of my enterprise. That must not be.” With an effort of will he composed himself to sleep. Still for a space he heard the weary hours wear on; but the lapse, the broken thread, and the dazed sense stole over him at last, and he dropped into a deep slumber. When he awoke the white light of noon was coming in strong dancing bars through the rents of the dark blanket that covered the little window, the clock of the Cathedral was chiming twelve once again, and over the little cobble causeway of the street in front there was the light patter of many sealskin shoes. “How could I sleep away my time like this with so much to do?” he thought, and leapt up instantly.

His old landlady had more than once looked in upon him during the morning, and watched him with an air of pity. “Poor lad, he looks ill,” she thought; and so left him to sleep on. While he ate his breakfast of skyr and skate and coffee, the good soul busied herself about him, asking what work he had a mind to do now that he had

come back, and where he meant to look for it, with other questions of a like kind. But he answered her many words with few of his own, merely saying that he intended to look about him before deciding on anything, and that he had something in his pocket to go on with in the meanwhile.

Some inquiries he made of her in his turn, and they were mainly about the new President or Governor: what like he was to look upon, and what his movements were, and if he was much seen in the town. The good body could tell him very little, being old, very deaf, and feeble on her feet, and going about hardly at all farther than the floors of the Cathedral on cleaning days. But her deaf old husband, hobbling in from the street at that moment, said he had heard somebody say that a session of Althing was sitting then, and that under the Republic that had lately been proclaimed Michael Sunlocks presided at the parliament house daily about midday.

Hearing this Jason rose from his unfinished breakfast, and went out on some pretended errand; but when he got to the wooden shed where Althing held its session

he found the sitting over and the delegates dispersed. His only object had been to see Michael Sunlocks, that he might know him, and having lost his first opportunity he returned the following day, coming earlier, before the sitting had begun or the delegates had yet gathered. But though he lounged within the door yard, while the members passed through, jesting and laughing together, he saw no one young enough to answer to Michael Sunlocks. He was too much in dread of attracting attention to inquire of the few idlers who looked on like himself, so he went away and came yet again the next day after and waited as before. Once more he felt that the man he looked for had not passed in with the rest, and labouring between fear of exciting suspicion and of throwing away further chances, he questioned the doorkeeper of the Chamber. This person stuttered before every word, but Jason learned at length that Michael Sunlocks had not been there for a week, that by the rule of the new Constitution the Governor presided only at the sittings of the higher house, the Council, and that the present sit-

tings were those of the lower house, the Senate.

That was Thursday, and Jason reflected that though four days were gone nothing was done. Vexed with himself for the caution that had wasted so much time, he boldly started inquiries on many sides. Then he learned that it was the daily practice of the Governor to go at twelve o'clock to the embankment in front of the merchant stores, where his gangs of masons were throwing up the new fort. At that hour that day Jason was there, but found that the Governor had already been and gone. Going earlier the next day, Friday, he learned that the Governor had not yet come, and so he lay about to wait for him. But the men whom he had questioned began to cast curious glances in his direction, and to mutter together in groups. Then he remembered that it was a time of revolution, that he might be mistaken for a Danish spy, and as such be forthwith seized and imprisoned. "That would stop everything," he thought, and moved away.

In a tavern of a bye-street, a long, lean

youth, threadbare and tipsy, formerly a student, and latterly expelled from the college for drunkenness, told him that the new Governor turned in at the Latin School every evening at dusk to inspect the drill of the regiment he had enrolled. So to the Latin School at dusk Jason made his way, but the place was dark and silent when he came upon it, and from a lad who was running out at the moment he heard that the drill-sergeant had fallen ill and the drill been discontinued.

On the wharf by the jetty the boatman, who had recognised him on landing, old Jón Olafsson, told him that serving whiting and skate to the house of Bishop John, he found that the new Governor was ever coming and going there. Now, of all houses, Jason had most avoided that house, lest he should be seen of those eyes that would surely read his mission at a glance. Yet as night fell in, and he might approach the place with safety, he haunted the ways that led to it. But never again did he see Michael Sunlocks, even in the uncertain darkness, and thinking how hard it was to set eyes on this man,

whom he must know of a surety before ever his enterprise could be ripe, a secret dread took hold of him, and he all but renounced his design. "Why is it that I cannot see him?" he thought. "Why, of all men in the town, is he the only one whom I can never meet face to face? Why, of all men here, am I the only one whom he has never seen?" It was as if higher powers were keeping them apart.

By this time he realised that he was being observed, for in the dusk, on the Thingvellir Road, that led past Government House, three men overtook him, and went on to talk with easy confidence in signs and broken words. He saw that they were Danes; that one was old and white-headed; another was young, sallow, and of a bitter spirit; and the third, who was elderly, was of a meek and quiet manner.

"How are they going on in the old country? Anything done yet? When are they coming?" said the young man.

"Ah, don't be afraid," said the old man. "We know you are watching him," he added, with a sideling motion of the head

towards Government House. "But he will send no more of our sons and brothers to his sulphur mines, to slave like beasts of burden. His days are numbered."

Then the young man laughed bitterly.

"They say he is to be married. Let him make merry while he may," he said with a deep oath.

And at that Jason faced about to them.

"You have been mistaken, sirs," he said. "I am not a spy, and neither am I an assassin."

He walked away with what composure he could command, but he trembled like a leaf, for by this encounter three new thoughts possessed him: first, that when his attempt had been made and his work done, he who believed himself appointed by God as the instrument of His righteous retribution, would stand no otherwise before man than as a common murderer; next, that unless he made haste with his design he would be forestalled by others with baser motives; and again that if his bearing had so nearly revealed his purpose to the Danes, it might suggest it to others with more interest in defeating it.

In his former rashness he had gone everywhere, even where the throngs were thickest, and talked with every one, even the six stalwart constables who had taken the place of the two rheumatic watchmen whom he knew in earlier days. But from the hour of that meeting with the Danes he found himself going about as stealthily as a cat, watching everybody, thinking everybody was watching him, shrinking from every sight, and quaking at every sound. "They can do what they like with me after it is over," he thought, "but first let it be done."

He felt afraid, who had never before known the taste of fear; he felt weary, who had never until then known what it was to be tired. "Oh, what is this that is coming over me?" he thought. "If I am doing well, why do I tremble?" For even while he planned his daring attempt a great feebleness seemed to be in all his members.

Thus it chanced that on the next day thereafter, Saturday, he saw many busy preparations along the line of the High Street and its byeways, such as the swinging of pulley ropes from house front to house front,

and the shaking out of bunting, without asking what festival they purported. But returning to his lodging in the evening, he found his landlady busy with preparations of a like kind about the entrance to the yard of the Cathedral, and then he knew too well what new thing was coming. All the same he asked, and his landlady answered him—

“Lord bless me,” she cried, “and haven’t you heard that the young Governor is to be wedded?”

“When?” said Jason.

“To-morrow,” said the old body.

“Where?”

“Why, in the Cathedral, surely. It will be a bonny sight, I promise you. You would like to see it, I make no doubt. Well, and so you shall, my son. I’ll get you in. Only leave it to me, love. Only leave it to me.”

Jason had expected this answer; like a horse that quivers under the lash, while it is yet hissing over his head, he had seen the blow coming, yet when it came it startled and stunned him. He got up, touching no food, and staggered back into the street.

It was now dark night. The stores were lit up by their open lamps, whose noisome smoke streamed out over the pathway, and mingled with the foul vapours that came from the drinking shops. The little town was very busy; throngs of people passed to and fro, and there was much shouting and noisy laughter.

To Jason all this was a mass of confusion, like a dream that is vague and broken, and has no semblance of reality. His knees smote together as he walked, and his mind was clogged and numbed. At length he was conscious that some brawlers who were lounging at the door of a tavern were jeering as he went by, and that a woman who was passing at the same moment was rating them roundly.

"Can't you see he's ill?" she was saying, and they were laughing lustily.

He turned towards the sea, and there, with only the black beach before his eyes and the monotonous beat of the waves in his ears, his faculties grew clearer. "O God!" he thought, "am I to strike him down before her face and at the very foot of the altar?"

It is terrible. It must be true that I am ill—or perhaps mad.”

But he wrestled with his irresolute spirit and overcame it. One by one he marshalled his reasons, and bit by bit he justified himself. When his anger wavered against the man who had twice supplanted him, he recalled his vow to execute judgment, and when his vow seemed horrible he remembered that Greeba herself had wronged him.

Thus he had juggled with himself night after night, and if morning after morning peace had come with the coming of light, it was gone for ever now. He rehearsed everything in his mind, and saw it all as he meant it to be. To-morrow while the bells were ringing he would go into the Cathedral. His old landlady, the caretaker, would put him in the front seat before the altar-rail. The pews would already be thronged, and there would be whispering behind him, and little light fits of suppressed laughter. Presently old Bishop John would come, halting along in his surplice, holding the big book in his trembling hands. Then the bridegroom would step forward, and he should

see him and mark him and know him. The bride herself would come next in a dazzling cloud of her bridesmaids, all dressed in white. Then as the two stood together—he and she, hand in hand, glancing softly at each other, and with all other eyes upon them, he himself would rise up—*and do it*. Suddenly there would be a wild cry, and she would turn towards him, and see him and understand him, and fall fainting before him. Then while both lay at his feet he would turn to those about him and say, very calmly, “Take me. It was I.” All being done he would not shrink, and when his time came he would meet his fate without flinching, and in the awful hereafter he would stand before the white throne and say, “It would have been an evil thing if God’s ways had not been justified before men; so I have executed on earth His judgment who has said in His Holy Writ that the wrongdoer shall surely suffer vengeance, even to the third and fourth generation of his children.”

Thinking so, in the mad tangle of his poor, disordered brain, yet with a great awe upon him, as of one laden with a mis-

sion from on high, Jason went back to his lodging, threw himself down, without undressing, upon the bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke next morning the bells in the turret overhead were jangling in his ears, and his deaf old landlady was leaning over him and calling to him.

"Get up, love, get up; it's late, love; you'll miss it all, love; it's time to go in, love," she was saying; and a little later she led him by a side door into the Cathedral.

He took a seat where he had decided to take it, in a corner of the pew before the altar-rail, and all seemed the same as he had pictured. The throngs of people were behind him, and he could hear their whispering and light laughter while they waited. There was the door at which the venerable Bishop would soon enter, carrying his big book, and there was the path, kept free and strewn with flowers, down which the bride and her train would pass on to the red form before him. Ah! the flowers—blood-red and purple—how sweetly they trailed over altar-rail, and pulpit, and the

tablet of the ten commandments! Following them with his eyes, while with his hands he fumbled his belt for *that* which he had concluded to carry there, suddenly he was smitten with an awful dread. One line of the printed words before him seemed to come floating through the air down to his face in a vapour of the same blood red.

Thou shalt do no murder!

Jason started to his feet. Why was he there? What had he come to do? He must go. The place was stifling him. In another moment he was crushing his way out of the Cathedral. He felt like a man sentenced to death.

Being in the free air again he regained his self-control. "What madness! It is no murder," he thought. But he could not get back to his seat, and so he turned to where the crowd was thickest outside. That was down the line of the pathway to the wide west entrance. As he approached this point he saw that the people were in high commotion. He hurried up to them and inquired the cause. The bridal party had just passed through. At that moment the

full swell of the organ came out through the open doors. The marriage service had begun.

After a while Jason had so far recovered his composure as to look about him. Deep as the year had sunk towards winter, the day was brilliant. The air was so bright that it seemed to ring. The sea in front of the town smiled under the sunlight; the broad stretch of lava behind it glistened; the glaciers in the distance sparkled, and the black jökulls far beyond showed their snowy domes against the blue sky. Oh, it was one of God's own mornings, when all His earth looks glad. And the Cathedral yard—for all it slept so full of dead men's bones—was that day a bright and busy place. Troops of happy girls were there in their jackets of grey, braided with gold or silver, and with belts of filigree; troops of young men, too, in their knee breeches, with bows of red ribbon, their dark-grey stockings and sealskin shoes; old men as well in their coats of homespun, and old women in their long blue cloaks; children in their plaited kirtles, and here

and there a traveller with his leather wallet for his snuff and money. At the entrance gate there was a triumphal arch of ribbons and evergreens, and under its shadow there were six men with horns and guns, ready for a salute when the bride appeared; and in the street outside there was a stall laden with food and drink for all who should that day come and ask.

Only to Jason was the happy place a Gethsemane, and standing in the thick of the crowd, on a grave with a sunken roof, under the shadow of the Cathedral, he listened with a dull ear to the buzz of talk between two old gossips behind him. He noticed that they were women with prominent eyeballs, which produced a dreamy, serious, half-stupid, half-humorous look, like that of the dogs in the picture that sit in the judgment-seat.

"She's English," said one. "No, Irish. No, Manx—whatever that means. Anyway she's foreign, and can't speak a word that anybody can understand. So Mother Helda says, and she's a worthy woman, you know, and cleans the floors at the Palace."

"But they say she's a sweet lady for all that," said the other ; and just then a young student at their back pushed his laughing face between their shoulders and said—

"Who ? Old Mother Helda ?"

"Mother Helda be bothered. The lady. And her father has been wrecked in coming to her wedding too ! Poor old man, what a pity ! The Governor sent my son Oscar with twenty of Zoega's men to Stappen to look for him. That was a fortnight ago. I expect him back soon."

"They might have waited until he came. Why didn't they ?"

"Oscar ?" said the laughing face between them.

"The father, goose. Poor lady, how lonely she must feel ! But then old Bishop John is so good to everybody."

"Well, he deserves a good wife."

"Old Bishop John ?" said the student, shaking his sides.

"The young Governor, I'm talking of ; and don't be so quick in snapping folks up, Jón Arnason. He's the best Governor we ever had. And what a change from the last

one. Why, he doesn't mind speaking to any one. Just think, only yesterday he stopped me and said, 'Good morning;' he said, 'your son won't be long away now,' quite humble and homelike."

"Well, God bless him—and her too, foreign or not—and may they live long"—

"And have a good dozen," added the laughing voice behind them.

And then all three laughed together.

By this time the organ, which had been silent for a little while, had burst forth afresh, and though its strains were loud and jubilant, yet to Jason they seemed to tell the story of his sorrow, and all the trouble of his days. He tried not to listen, and to pass the moments in idly watching the swaying throng, whose heads beneath his own rose and fell like a broken sea. But his mind *would* be active, and the broad swell of the music floated into his soul and consumed it. "Can it be possible," he thought, "that I intend to smite him down when he comes through that doorway by her side? And yet I love her—and he is my brother."

Still the organ rang out over graveyard

and people, and only by an effort of will could Jason hold back his tears. "Man! man!" he cried in his heart, "call it by its true name — not judgment, but murder. Yes, murder for jealous love, murder for love despised!"

A new and awful light had then illumined his gloomy mind, and his face betokened his sufferings, for though no tears fell down his hard cheeks, his eyes were bloodshot. In complete self-forgetfulness he pressed forward, until his way was stopped by a little iron cross that stood at the head of a grave. "My mother's," he thought. "No, hers is next."

The organ broke into yet another strain at that moment—a proud, triumphant peal of song, which in the frenzy of Jason's mind seemed either to reach up to heaven's gate or to go down to the brink of hell. There was a movement among the people, a buzz of voices, a hush, and a whispered cry, "They are coming, they are coming!"

"God bless them," said one.

"Heaven protect them," said another.

And every blessing fell on Jason like a

curse. "Murder let it be," he thought, and turned his eyes where other eyes were looking. Then passing under the broad arch, stepping out of the blue shadow into the white sunshine, all radiant in her grace and lovely sweetness, meek and tender, with tears in her soft brown eyes—it was she, it was she; it was Greeba—Greeba—Greeba.

Jason felt his strength exhausted. A strange dizziness seized him. He looked down to avoid the light. His eyes fell on the iron cross before him, and he read the name graven upon it. *The name was his own.*

Then everything seemed to whirl around him. He remembered no more, save a shuffling of feet, a dull hum over his head, like the noise of water in the ears of a drowning man, and a sense of being lifted and carried.

But another consciousness came to him, and it was very sweet, though uncertain. He was floating up—up—up to where the mountains were green, and the sea was tranquil, and the trees made music in the quiet air. And Greeba was there, and she

was laying her cool hand on his hot forehead, and he was looking at the troubled heaving of her round bosom. "Aren't you very proud of yourself, Jason?" she was whispering softly, and then he was clasping the beautiful girl in his arms and kissing her, and she was springing away, blushing deeply, and he was holding down his head, and laughing in his heart.

"Lie still, love; lie you still," fell on his ear, and he opened his eyes. He was in his own room at the little cottage of the caretakers. The old woman was bending over him, and bathing his forehead with one hand, while with the other hand she was holding her apron to her eyes.

"He's coming round nicely, praise the Lord," she said cheerily.

"I remember," said Jason, in a weak voice. "Did I faint?"

"Faint, love?" said the good soul, putting her deaf ear close to his lips. "Why, it's fever, love; brain fever."

"What time is it?" said Jason.

"Time, love? Lord help us, what does the boy want with the time? But it's just

the way with all of them. Mid-evening, love."

"What day is it—Sunday?"

"Sunday, love? No, but Tuesday. It was on Sunday you fell senseless, poor boy."

"Where was that?"

"Where? Why, where but in the Cathedral yard, just at the very minute the weddingers were coming out at the door!"

And hearing this Jason's face broke into a smile like sunshine, and he uttered a loud cry of relief. "Thank God. Oh, thank God."

But while an angel of hope seemed to bring him good tidings of a great peril averted, and even as a prayer gushed from his torn heart, he remembered the vision of his delirium, and knew that he was for ever a bereaved and broken man. At that his face, which had been red as his hair, grew pale as ashes, and a low cunning came over him, and he wondered if he had betrayed himself in his unconsciousness.

"Have I been delirious?" he asked.

"Delirious, love? Oh no, love, no; only distraught a little and cursing sometimes, the

Saints preserve us," said the old landlady in her shrill treble.

Jason remembered that the old woman was deaf, and gathering that she alone had nursed him, and that no one else had seen him since his attack, except her deaf husband and a druggist from the High Street who had bled him, he smiled and was satisfied.

"Lord bless me, how he mends," said the hearty old woman, and she gave him the look of an affectionate dog.

"And now, good soul, I am hungry, and must make up for all this fasting," said Jason.

"Ay, ay, and that you must, lad," said the old woman, and off she went to cook him something to eat.

But his talk of hunger had been no more than a device to get rid of her, for he knew that the kind creature would try to restrain him from rising. So when she was gone he stumbled to his feet, feeling very weak and dazed, and with infinite struggle and sweat tugged on his clothes—for they had been taken off—and staggered out into the streets.

It was night, and the clouds hung low as if snow might be coming, but the town seemed very light, as with bonfires round about it and rockets shot into the air, and very noisy, too, as with guns fired and music played, so that Jason's watery eyes felt dazzled, and his singing ears were stunned. But he walked on, hardly knowing which way he was going, and hearing only as sounds at sea the voices that called to him from the doors of the drinking-shops, until he came out at the bridge to the Thingvellir Road. And there, in the sombre darkness, he was overtaken by the three Danes who had spoken to him before.

"So your courage failed you at the last moment—I watched you and saw how it was. Ah, don't be afraid ; we are your friends, and you are one of us. Let us play at hide and seek no longer."

"They say he is going down the firth in search of his wife's father. Take care he does not slip away. Old Jorgen is coming back. Good night."

So saying, without once turning their faces towards Jason's face, they strode past him

with an indifferent air. Then Jason became conscious that Government House was ablaze with lights, that some of its windows were half down, that sounds of music and dancing came from within, and that on the grass plat in front, which was lit by torches, men and women in gay costumes were strolling to and fro in pairs.

And turning from the bridge towards the house he saw a man go by on horseback in the direction of the sea, and remembered in a dull way that just there and at that hour he had seen Michael Sunlocks ride past him in the dusk.

What happened thereafter he never rightly knew, only that in a distempered dream he was standing with others outside the rails about Government House while the snow began to fall through the darkness, that he saw the dancers circling across the lighted windows and heard the music of the flutes and violins above the steady chime of the sea, that he knew this merry-making to be a festival of her marriage whom he loved with a love beyond that of his immortal soul, that the shame of his condition pained him, the

pain of it maddened him, the madness of it swept away his consciousness, and that when he came to himself he had forced his way into the house, thinking to meet his enemy face to face, and was in a room alone with Greeba, who was cowering before him with looks of dismay.

"Jason," she was saying, "why are you here?"

"Why are *you* here?" he asked.

"Why have you followed me?" she cried.

"Why have you followed *him*?"

"What have you come for?"

"Is *this* what *you* have come for?"

"Jason," she cried again, "I wronged you, that is true, but you forgave me. I asked you to choose for me, and if you had said 'Stay,' I should have stayed. But you released me, you know you did. You gave me up to him, and now he is my husband."

"But this man is Michael Sunlocks," said Jason.

"Didn't you know that before?" said Greeba. "Ah, then, I know what you have come for. You have recalled your forgiveness, and have come to punish me for deserting

you. But spare me! Oh, spare me! Not for my own sake, but his; for I am his wife now, and he loves me very dearly, No, no, not that, but only spare me, Jason," she cried, and crouched at his feet.

"I would not harm a hair of your head, Greeba," he said.

"Then what have you come for?" she said.

"This man is the son of Stephen Orry," he said.

"Then it is for him," she cried, and leapt to her feet. "Ah, now I understand. I have not forgotten the night in Port-y-Vullin."

"Does *he* know of that?" said Jason.

"No."

"Does he know I am here?"

"No."

"Does he know we have met?"

"No."

"Let me see him."

"Why do you ask to see him?"

"Let me see him."

"But why?" she stammered. "Why see him? It is I who have wronged you."

"That's why I want to see him," said Jason.

She uttered a cry of terror and staggered back. There was an ominous silence, in which it passed through Greeba's mind that all that was happening then had happened before. She could hear Jason's laboured breathing, and the dull thud of the music through the walls.

"Jason," she cried, "what harm has he ever done you? I alone am guilty before you. If your vengeance must fall on any one let it fall on me."

"Where is he?" said Jason.

"He is gone," said Greeba.

"Gone?"

"Yes, to find my poor father. The dear old man was wrecked in coming here, and my husband sent men to find him. But they blundered and came back empty-handed, and not half-an-hour ago he went off himself."

"Was he riding?" said Jason; but without waiting for an answer he made towards the door.

"Wait! Where are you going?" cried Greeba.

Swift as lightning the thought had flashed through her mind, "What if he should follow him!"

Now the door to the room was a heavy, double-hung door of antique build, and at the next instant she had leapt to it, and shot the heavy wooden bar that bolted it.

At that he laid one powerful hand on the bar itself, and wrenched it outwards by the leverage of its iron hoops, and it cracked and broke, and fell to the ground in splinters.

Then her strong excitement lent the brave girl strength, and her fear for her husband gave her courage, and crying, "Stop, for Heaven's sake stop," she put her back to the door, tore up the sleeve of her dress, and thrust her bare right arm through the loops where the bar had been.

"Now," she cried, "you must break my arm after it."

"God forbid," said Jason, and he fell back for a moment at that sight. But recovering himself, he said, "Greeba, I would not touch your beautiful arm to hurt it; no, not for all the wealth of the world. But I must go, so let me pass."

Still her terror was centred on the thought of Jason's vengeance.

"Jason," she cried, "he is my husband. Only think—my husband."

"Let me pass," said Jason.

"Jason," she cried again, "my husband is everything to me, and I am all in all to him."

"Let me pass," said Jason.

"You intend to follow him. You are seeking him to kill him."

"Let me pass."

"Deny it."

"Let me pass."

"Never," she cried. "Kill *me* if you will."

"Not for my soul's salvation!" said Jason.

"Then give up your wicked purpose. Give it up, give it up."

"Only when *he* shall have given up his life."

"Then I warn you I will show you no pity, for you have shown none to me."

At that she screamed for help, and presently the faint music ceased, and there was a noise of hurrying feet. Jason stood a moment listening; then he looked towards

the window, and saw that it was of one frame, and had no sash that opened. At the next instant he had doubled his arms across his face, and dashed through glass and bars.

A minute afterwards the room was full of men and women, and Jason was brought back into it, pale, sprinkled with snow, and blood-stained.

"I charge that man with threatening and attempting the life of my husband," Greeba cried.

Then it seemed as if twenty strong hands laid hold of Jason at once. But no force was needed, for he stood quiet and silent, and looked like a man who had walked in his sleep, and been suddenly awakened by the sound of Greeba's voice. One glance he gave her of great suffering and proud defiance, and then, guarded on either hand, passed out of the place like a captured lion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PEACE OATH.

THERE was short shrift for Red Jason. He was tried by the court nearest the spot, and that was the criminal court over which the Bishop in his civil capacity presided, with nine of his neighbours on the bench beside him. From this court an appeal was possible to the Spring Court, and again from the Spring Court to the Court of the Quarter, which was the High Court of Althing; but appeal in this case there was none, for there was no defence. And because Icelandic law did not allow of the imprisonment of a criminal until after he had been sentenced, an inquest was called forthwith, lest Jason should escape or compass the crime he had attempted. So the Court of Inquiry sat the same night in the wooden shed that served both for Senate and House of Justice.

The snow was now falling heavily, and

the hour was late, but the court-house was thronged. It was a little place—a plain box, bare, featureless, and chill, with walls, roof, and seats of wood, and floor of hard earth. Four short benches were raised, step above step, against the farthest side, and on the highest of these Bishop John sat, with three of his colleagues on each of the three rows beneath him. The prisoner stood on a broad stool to the right, and the witnesses on a like stool to the left. A wooden bar crossed the room about mid-way, and in the open space between that and the door the spectators were crowded together. The place was lighted by candles, and some were fixed to the walls, others were held by ushers on the end of long sticks, and a few were hung to the roof rafters by hemp ropes tied about their middle. The floor ran like a stream, and the atmosphere was full of the vapour of the snow that was melting on the people's clothes. Nothing could be ruder than the court-house, but the Court that sat there observed a rule of procedure that was almost an idolatry of form.

The prisoner was called by the name of Jason, son of Stephen Orry, and having answered in a voice so hollow that it seemed to come out of the earth beneath him, he rose to his place. His attitude was dull and impassive, and he seemed hardly to see the restless crowd that murmured at sight of him. His tall figure stooped, there was a cloud on his strong brow, and a slow fire in his blood-shot eyes, and his red hair, long as a woman's, hung in disordered masses down his worn cheeks to his shoulders. The Bishop, a venerable prelate of great age, looked at him and thought, "That man's heart is dead within him."

The Spokesman of the Court was a middle-aged man, who was short, had little piercing eyes, a square brush of iron-grey hair that stood erect across the top of his corded forehead, and a crisp, clear utterance, like the crackle of a horse's hoofs on the frost.

Jason was charged with an attempt to take the life of Michael Sunlocks, first President of the second Republic. He did not plead, and had no defence, and the witnesses

against him spoke only in answer to the leading questions of the judges.

The first of the witnesses was Greeba herself, and her evidence, given in English, required to be interpreted. All her brave strength was now gone. She trembled visibly. Her eyes were down, her head was bent, her face was half-hidden by the hood of a cloak she wore, and her tones were barely audible. She had little to say. The prisoner had forced his way into Government House, and there, to her own face, had threatened to take the life of her husband. In plain words he had done so, and then made show of going in pursuit of her husband that he might carry out his design.

"Wait," said Bishop John, "your husband was not present?"

"No," said Greeba.

"There was, therefore, no direct violence?"

"None."

"And the whole sum of the prisoner's offence, so far as you know of it, lies in the use of the words that you have repeated?"

"Yes."

Then, turning to the Spokesman of the Court, the old Bishop said—

“There has been no overt act. This is not an attempt, but a threat to take life, and that is not a crime by the law of this or any other Christian country.”

“Your pardon, my lord,” said the little man, in his crisp tones. “I will show that the prisoner is guilty of the essential part of murder itself. Murder, my lord,” he added, “is not merely to compass the destruction of a life, for there is homicide by misadventure, there is justifiable homicide, and there are the rights, long recognised by Icelandic law, of the avengers of blood. Murder is to kill in secrecy and after long-harboured malice, and now, my lord, I shall show that the prisoner has lain in wait to slay the President of the Republic.”

At that Greeba stood down and other witnesses followed her. Nearly every one had been summoned with whom Jason had exchanged words since he landed eight days before. There was the lean student who had told him of the drill at the Latin School, the little tailor who had explained the work

at the jail, the stuttering doorkeeper at the Senate house, and one of the masons at the fort. Much was made of the fainting in the Cathedral yard on the Sunday morning, and out of the deaf landlady, the Cathedral caretaker, some startling disclosures seemed to be drawn.

"Still," said the old Bishop, "I see no overt act."

"Good gracious, my lord," said the little Spokesman, "are we to wait until the knife itself has been reddened?"

"God forbid," said Bishop John.

Then came two witnesses to prove motive. The first of them was the tipsy comrade of former days, who had drawn Jason into the drinking-shop. He could say of his own knowledge that Jason was jealous of the new Governor. The two were brothers in a sort of way. So people said, and so Jason had told him. They had the same father, but different mothers. Jason's mother had been the daughter of the old Governor, who turned his back on her at her marriage. At her death he relented, and tried to find Jason, but could not, and then took up with Michael

Sunlocks. People said that was the beginning of the new President's fortune. At all events Jason thought he had been supplanted, was very wroth, and swore he would be revenged.

The second of the two witnesses pointed to a very different motive. He was one of the three Danes who had twice spoken to Jason—the elderly man of the meek and quiet manner. Though himself loyal to the Icelandic Republic, he had been much thrown among its enemies. Jason was one of them; he came here as a spy direct from Copenhagen, and his constant associates were Thomsen, an old, white-headed man, living in the High Street, and Polvesen, a young and sallow man, who kept one of the stores facing the sea. With these two Jason had been heard by him to plan the assassination of the President.

At this evidence there was a deep murmur among the people, and it was seen that Greeba had risen again to her feet. Her heart burned and stormed within her. She tried to speak, but could not. At the same moment Jason turned his bloodshot eyes in

her direction, and then her limbs gave way under her, and she sank back with a moan. The Court misread her emotion, and she was removed. Jason's red eyes followed her constantly.

"This is a case for the Warning, not for punishment," said Bishop John. "It is plainly written in our old Law Book that if a man threaten to slay another man he shall be warned of the gravity of the crime he contemplates and of the penalty attaching to it."

"Gracious heavens, my lord," cried the little Spokesman, "what reason have we to assume that this prisoner is ignorant of either? With a life to guard that is prized by friends and precious to the State shall we let this man go free who had sworn before witnesses to destroy it?"

"God forefend," said the Bishop.

It was lawful to question the prisoner, and so he was questioned.

"Is it true that you have been lying in wait to kill the President?" asked the Spokesman.

But Jason made no answer.

"Is it true that you have done so from a desire for personal vengeance?"

No answer.

“Or from political motives?”

No answer.

“Or both?”

Still no answer.

Then the Spokesman turned back to the Court. “The stubborn persistence of the prisoner is easy to understand,” he said, and smiled.

“Wait,” said the old Bishop, and he turned towards Jason.

“Have you any valid plea?”

But Jason gave no sign.

“Listen,” said Bishop John. “Though the man who compasses the destruction of a single life is as though he had destroyed a world, for the posterity of him who is dead might have filled a world, yet have all laws of men since the Pentateuch recognised certain conditions that limit the gravity of the crime. If the man who is slain has himself slain the near kindred of his slayer, though the law of Iceland would no longer hold him guiltless, as in the ancient times when evil for evil was the rule and sentence, neither would it punish him as a murderer, who

must eat the bread and drink the water of misery all his days. Now what is true of murder must be true of intent to murder, and though I am loth to believe it possible in this instance, honouring and loving as we all do that good man whom you are charged with lying in wait to kill, yet in my duty must I ask you the question—Has Michael Sunlocks spilled blood of your blood, and is it as a redeemer of blood in a blood-feud that you go about to slay him?”

There was a dead hush in the little crowded court-house as Jason lifted his heavy, bloodshot eyes to Bishop John's face and answered, in a weary voice, “I have nothing to say.”

Then an aged Lutheran priest, who had sat within the rail, with a snuff-box in his hand and a red print handkerchief across his knee, hobbled up to the witness stool and tendered evidence. He could throw light on the prisoner's hatred of the President, if it was true that the President was the son of Stephen Orry. He knew the prisoner, and had named him in his baptism. He had known the prisoner's mother also,

and had sat with her at her death. It was quite true that she was a daughter of the late Governor, and had been badly treated by her father. But she had been yet more badly treated by her husband, who married again while she was still alive, and had another son by the other wife. On her deathbed she had heard of this, and told the prisoner, who then and there, this witness being present, made an awful vow of vengeance upon his father and his father's son.

The old priest was heard in silence, and his words sent a quiver through the court-house. Even Jason, who had shown no interest save when Greeba was removed, lifted up his bloodshot eyes again and listened.

And Bishop John, visibly moved, turned to the Court and said, "Let us put this prisoner back to be tried by the High Court and the Speaker."

"What, my lord!" cried the little Spokesman, with a lofty look, "and set him at liberty in the meantime, to carry out the crime he threatens?"

"Heaven forbid," said the Bishop.

“Remember, until he has been condemned we have no power to hold him,” said the Spokesman.

Bishop John turned to an usher and said, “Bring me the Statute Book,” and the great tome was brought. The Bishop opened it and again turned to the prisoner. “The Almighty,” said he, “created one man at the beginning to teach us that all men are brethren, and the law of our old country provides that when two have had disputes and pursued each other on account of hatred, even as brethren they shall make peace before their neighbours. Now listen to the words I shall read to you, and be ready to say if you will swear to them.”

Then a great silence fell upon the people, while in solemn tones the old Bishop read the Peace Oath.

“Ye two shall be set at one and live friendly together, at meat and at drink, in the Althing and at meetings, at kirk prayers and in King’s palace; and in whatever place else men meet together, there shall ye be so set at one, as if this quarrel had never come between you. Ye shall share knife

and meat together, and all things besides, as friends and not as enemies.”

Bishop John paused and looked over his spectacles at Jason, who stood as before, with the cloud on his brow and the slow fire in his deep eyes, but with no sign of feeling or interest.

“Will you promise to swear to this, when he shall have returned who should swear to it with you?” said the Bishop.

Then all eyes turned towards Jason, and there came across his face at that moment the look of a baited dog.

“No,” he growled.

The Spokesman shifted in his seat and the people grew restless.

“Listen again,” said the Bishop, and his long white beard shook and his solemn voice rose to a shrill cry as he twisted back to the book and read—

“But if one of you be so mad that he breaks this truce thus made, and slays after pledges have been made and his blade has reddened, he shall be an outlaw, accursed and driven away, so far as men drive wolves farthest away. He shall be banished of God

and all good Christian men, as far as Christian men seek churches, as mothers bring forth sons, son calls mother, flames blaze up, mankind kindle fire, earth is green, sun shines, and snow covers the ground; he shall flee from kirk and Christian men, God's house and mankind, and from every home save hell."

Then there was a pause and a great hush, and Bishop John lifted his eyes from the book and said—

"Will you swear to it?"

Again all eyes turned towards Jason, and again his face, which had been impassive, took the look of a baited dog.

"No, no, no," he cried in a loud voice, and then the great silence was broken by deep murmurs.

"It is useless," said the Spokesman. "Warnings and peace oaths, though still valid, are the machinery of another age. This prisoner is not ignorant of the gravity of the crime he contemplates, nor yet of the penalty attaching to it."

There was an audible murmur of assent from the people. "That's true," said one.

"It's the truest word spoken to-night," said another. "The old man is all for mercy," said a third. "It isn't safe," said a fourth. And there was other whispering, and much nodding of heads and shuffling of feet.

Encouraged by these comments the little Spokesman added—

"In any other country at this age of the world a man who tacitly admitted a design to take life would be promptly clapped into prison."

"Ay, ay," the people muttered, but Bishop John drew himself up and said, "In any other country a criminal who showed no fear of the death that hung over him would be straightway consigned to a madhouse."

"We have no madhouse in this island, my lord," said the little Spokesman, "save the Sulphur Mines, and there he must go."

"Wait," said the Bishop, and once again he turned to the prisoner. "If this Court should agree to ship you out of Iceland will you promise never more to return to it?"

For the third time all eyes were turned on Jason, but he did not seem to hear the Bishop's question.

"Will you promise?" said the Bishop again.

"No," said Jason.

"Dangerous trifling," said the Spokesman. "When you seize a mad dog you strangle it."

"Ay, ay," cried many voices at once, and great excitement prevailed.

The old Bishop drew back with a sigh of relief. He loved Michael Sunlocks, and had been eager to save him. He pitied Greeba, and for her sake also had been anxious to protect her husband. But from the moment he saw Jason and thought, "That man's heart is dead within him," his love had struggled with his sense of duty. As the trial went on he had remembered Jason and recalled his bitter history, and seized with a strong sympathy he had strained every nerve to keep back his punishment. He had done all he could do, he had nothing to reproach himself with, and full of a deep and secret joy at the certainty of the safety of Sunlocks, he now fell back that the law might take its course.

The Court was counted out, and then Bishop John turned for the last time to

Jason, and delivered judgment, "The sentence of this Court," he said, "is that you be removed from here to the Sulphur Mines, and be kept there twelve months certain, and as long thereafter as you refuse to take the Oath of Peace pledging yourself for ever, as long as you live or the world endures, to be at one with your enemy as brothers before all men living."

Now Greeba alone knew the truth about Jason. When she had fled from Man without word or warning it had not been out of fear of him, but of her brothers. Her meeting with Michael Sunlocks, her short stay with the good old Bishop John, her marriage and the festival that followed, had passed her by like a dream. Then came the first short parting with Sunlocks, when he had said, "I must leave you for a fortnight, for the men I sent in search of your father have blundered and returned without him." She had cried a little at that, and he had kissed her, and made a brave show of his courage, though she could see the tears in his own big shining eyes. But it was all a dream, a sweet and

happy dream, and only by the coming of Jason had the dream been broken.

Then followed her terror, her plea, her fear for her husband's life, her defiance of Jason, and the charge she made against him.

And the first burst of her passion over, she had thought to herself, "My husband is safe, but Jason will now tell all, and I shall be a lost and ruined woman," for nothing had she yet said to Michael Sunlocks concerning the man who had wooed and won and released her during the long years of his silence and her trouble. "He will hear the story now," she thought, "and not from my lips but from Jason's."

Being then so far immersed she could not but go on, and so she had allowed herself to be led to the court-house. No one there had thought to ask her if she had known anything of Jason before that day, and she on her part had said nothing of knowing him. But when Jason had looked at her with eyes of reproach that seemed to go through her soul, he seemed to be saying, "This is but half the truth. Dare you not tell the rest?"

Then listening to the lying of other witnesses, and looking up at Jason's face, so full of pain, and seeing how silent he was under cruel perjury, she remembered that this man's worst crime had been his love of her, and so she staggered to her feet to confess everything.

When she came to herself after that, she was back in her own home—her new home, the home of her happy dream, her husband's home and hers, and there her first fear returned to her. "He will tell all," she thought, "and evil tongues will make it worse, and shame will fall upon my husband, and I shall be lost, lost, lost."

She waited with feverish impatience for the coming of the Bishop to tell her the result of the trial, and at length he came.

"What have they done with him?" she cried; and he told her.

"What defence did he make?" she asked.

"None," said the Bishop.

"What did he say?" she asked again.

"Not a word but 'No,'" said the Bishop.

Then she drew a long breath of immense relief, and at the next instant she reproached

herself. How little of soul she had been ! And how great of heart had been Jason ! He could have wrecked her life with a word, but he had held his peace. She had sent him to prison, and rather than smite he had suffered himself to be smitten. She felt herself small and mean.

And Bishop John, having, as he thought, banished Greeba's terror, hobbled to the door, for now the hour was very late, and the snow was still falling.

"The poor soul will do your good husband no mischief now. Poor lad ! poor lad ! After all, he is more fit for a madhouse than for a prison. Good night, my child, good night."

And so the good old man went his way.

It was intended that Jason should start for the Sulphur Mines on the following day, and he was lodged overnight in a little house of detention that stood on the south of the High Street. But the snow continued to fall the whole night through, and in the morning the roads were impassable. Then it was decided to postpone the long journey until the storm should have passed, the frost set in, and the desolate white wastes to be crossed become

hard and firm. It was now Wednesday of the second week in October—the Goremonth—and the people were already settling down to the long rest of an Icelandic winter. The merchants began to sleep the live-long day in their deserted stores in the Cheapstead, and the bonders, who had come up with the last of their stock, to drink and doze in the taverns. All that day the snow fell in fine dust like flour, until, white as it was, the air grew dark with it. At the late dawn of the next day the snow was still falling, and a violent gale had then risen. Another and another and yet another day went by, and still the snow fell and the gale continued. For two days there was no daylight, and only at noon through the giddy air a fiery glow burned for an hour along the southern sky and then went out. Nothing could be seen of fell or firth, and nothing could be heard save the baying of the dogs at night and the roar of the sea at all times, for the wind made no noise in the soft snow, but drove it along in sheets like silent ghosts.

Never before had Greeba seen anything

so terrible ; and still more fearful than the great snow itself was the anxiety it brought her. Where was Michael Sunlocks ? Where was her father ? There was only one other whose condition troubled her, and she knew too well where he was—he was lying in the dark cell of the dark house in the High Street.

While the storm lasted all Reykjavík lay asleep, and Greeba could do nothing. But one morning when she awoke and turned to the window, as was her wont, to learn if the weary snow was still falling, she could see nothing at first for the coating of ice and hoar-frost that covered the glass. But the snow had ceased, the wind had fallen, the air was clear and the light was coming. The buildings of the town, from the Cathedral to the hovels of the fishing quarter, looked like snow mounds in the desert ; the black waste of lava was gone ; the black beach was gone ; the black jökulls were gone ; the black headland was gone that had stretched like a giant hand of many fingers into the black firth ; but height above height, and length beyond length, as far as from sea to sky and from

sea to sea, the world lay lifeless and silent and white around her.

Then, the town being once more awake, Greeba had news of Jason. It came through a little English maid, whom Sunlocks had found for her, from Oscar, the young man who had gone out in search of her father and returned without him. Jason was ill. Five days he had eaten nothing, and nothing had he drunk except water. He was in a fever—a brain fever—and it was now known for certain that he was the man who had fainted outside the Cathedral on the marriage morning, that he had been ill ever since then, and that the druggist of the High Street had bled him.

With these tidings Greeba hurried away to the Bishop.

“The poor man has brain fever,” she said. “He was ill when he made the threat, and when he recovers he will regret it; I am sure he will—I know he will. Set him at liberty, for mercy’s sake,” she cried; and she trembled as she spoke, lest in the fervour of her plea the Bishop should read her secret.

But he only shook his head and looked tenderly down at her, and said very gently,

though every word went to her heart like a stab—

“Ah, it is like a good woman to plead for one who has injured her. But no, my child, no; it may not be. Poor lad, no one now can do anything for him save the President himself; and he is not likely to liberate a man who lies in wait to kill him.”

“He *is* likely,” thought Greeba, and straightway she conceived of a plan. She would go to Jason in his prison. Yes, she herself would go to him, and prevail with him to put away all thoughts of vengeance and be at peace with her husband. Then she would wait for the return of Michael Sunlocks, and plead with that dear heart, that could deny her nothing, to grant her Jason’s pardon. Thus it would come about that she, who had stood between these two to separate them, would at length stand between them to bring them together.

So thinking, and crying a little, like a true woman, at the prospect of so much joy, she waited for Jason’s recovery, that she might carry her purpose into effect. Meantime she contrived to send him jellies and soups, such

as might tempt the appetite of a sick man. She thought she sent them secretly, but with less than a woman's wit she employed a woman on her errand. This person was the little English maid, and she handed over the duty to Oscar, who was her sweetheart. Oscar talked openly of what he was doing, and thus all Reykjavík knew that the tender-hearted young wife of the Governor held communication of some sort with the man whom she had sent to jail.

Then one day, on hearing that Jason was better, though neither was he so well as to travel nor was the snow hard enough to walk upon, Greeba stole across to the prison in the dark of the afternoon, saying nothing to any one of her intention.

The stuttering doorkeeper of the Senate was the jailor, and he betrayed great concern when Greeba asked to see his prisoner, showing by his ghastly looks, for his words would not come, that it would be rash on her part, after helping so much towards Jason's imprisonment, to trust herself in his presence.

"But what have I to fear?" she thought;

and, with a brave smile, she pushed her way through.

She found Jason in a square box built of heavy piles, laid horizontally both for walls and roof, dark and damp and muggy, lighted in the day by a hole in the wood not larger than a man's hand, and in the night by a sputtering candle hung from the rafters. He sat on a stool; his face was worn, his head was close-cropped to relieve the heat of his brain, and on the table by his side lay his red hair, all but as long as his mother's was when it fell to the shears of the Jew on the wharf.

He gave no sign when Greeba entered, though he knew she was there, but sat with his face down and one hand on the table.

"Jason," she said, "I am ashamed. It is I who have brought you to this. Forgive me! forgive me! But my husband's life was in danger, and what was I to do?"

Still he gave no sign.

"Jason," she said again, "you have heaped coals of fire on my head; for I have done nothing but injure you, and though you

might have done as much for me you never have."

At that the fingers of his hand on the table grasped the edge of it convulsively.

"But, Jason," she said, "all is not lost yet. No, for I can save you still. Listen. You shall give me your promise to make peace with my husband, and when my husband returns he will grant me your pardon. Oh yes, I know he will, for he is tender-hearted, and he will forgive you; yes, he will forgive you"——

"My curse on him and his forgiveness," cried Jason, rising suddenly and bringing down his fist on the table. "Who is he that he should forgive me? It has not been for his sake that I have been silent, with the devil at my side urging me to speak. And for all that *you* have made me to suffer *he* shall yet pay double. Let it go on; let him send me away; let him bury me at his mines. But I shall live to find him yet. Something tells me that I shall not die until I have met with that man face to face."

And Greeba went back home with these mad words ringing in her ears. "It is use-

less to try," she thought. "I have done all I can. My husband is before everything. I shall say nothing to him now."

None the less she cried very bitterly, and was still crying when at bedtime her little English maid came up to her and chattered of the news of the day. It seemed that some Danish storekeepers on the cheapstead had lately been arrested as spies, brought to trial, and condemned.

When Greeba awoke next morning, after a restless night, while the town still lay asleep, and only the croak of the ravens from the rocks above the firth broke the silence of the late dawn, she heard the hollow tread of many footsteps on the frozen snow of the Thingvellir Road, and peering out through the window, which was coated with hoar-frost, she saw a melancholy procession. Three men, sparsely clad in thin tunics, snow stockings, and skin caps, walked heavily in file, chained together hand to hand and leg to leg, with four armed guards, closely muffled to the ears, riding leisurely beside them. They were prisoners bound for the sulphur mines of Krisuvik. The first of

them was Jason, and he swung along with his long stride and his shorn head thrown back and his pallid face held up. The other two were old Thomsen and young Polvesen, the Danish storekeepers.

It was more than Greeba could bear to look upon that sight, for it brought back the memory of that other sight on that other morning, when Jason came leaping down to her from the mountains, over gorse and cushag and hedge and ditch. So she turned her head away and covered her eyes with her hands. And then one—two—three—four—the heavy footsteps went on over the snow.

The next thing she knew was that her English maid was in her bedroom, saying, "Some strangers in the kitchen are asking for you. They are Englishmen, and have just come ashore, and they call themselves your brothers."

CHAPTER X.

THE FAIRBROTHERS.

Now when the Fairbrothers concluded that they could never give rest to their tender consciences until they had done right by their poor sister Greeba, they set themselves straightway to consider the ways and means. Ballacrairie they must sell in order that its proceeds might be taken to Greeba as her share and interest ; but Ballacrairie belonged to Jacob, and another provision would forthwith need to be made for him. So after much arguing and some nagging across the hearth of the kitchen at Lague it was decided that each of Jacob's five brothers should mortgage his farm to one-sixth its value, and that the gross sum of their five-sixths should be Jacob's for his share. This arrangement would have the disadvantage of leaving Jacob without land, but he showed a magnanimous spirit in that regard.

"Don't trouble about me," said he, "it's sweet and nice to do a kindness to your own brothers."

And four of his brethren applauded that sentiment, but Thurstan curled up his red nose and thought, "Aw, yes, of coorse, a powerful big boiler of brotherly love the little miser keeps going under his weskit."

And having so decided, they further concluded to see the crops off the ground, and then lose no time in carrying out their design. "Let's wait for the melya," said Asher, meaning the harvest-home, "and then off for Marky the Lord." The person who went by this name was one Mark Skillicorn, an advocate, of Ramsey, who combined the functions of pettifogger with those of money-lender and auctioneer. Marky the Lord was old, and plausible, and facetious. He was a distant relative of the Fairbrothers by the side of their mother's French family; and it was a strange chain of circumstances that no big farmer ever got into trouble but he became a client of Marky the Lord's, that no client of Marky the Lord's did not in the end go altogether to the bad, and

that poor Marky the Lord never had a client who did not die in his debt. Nevertheless Marky the Lord grew richer as his losses grew heavier, and more facetious as his years increased. Oh, he was a funny dog, was Marky the Lord; but there was just one dog on the island a shade or two funnier still, and that was Jacob Fairbrother. This thrifty soul had for many a year kept a nest of private savings, and even in the days when he and his brethren went down to make a poor mouth before their father at Castletown he had money secretly lent out on the conscientious interest of only three per cent. above the legal rate.

And thus it chanced that when Ballacraine was advertised in big letters on every barn door in the north of Man, Jacob Fairbrother went down to Marky the Lord, and made a private bargain to buy it in again. So when the day of the sale came, and Marky the Lord strode over the fields with some thirty men—farmers, miners, advocates, and parsons—at his heels, and then drew up on the roadside by the “Hibernian,” and there mounted the till-board of a cart

for the final reckoning, little Jacob was too much moved to be present, though his brothers were there, all glooming around on the outside of the group, with their hands in their breeches pockets.

Ballacraine was knocked down cheap to somebody that nobody knew, and then came the work of the mortgages; so once again Jacob went off to Marky the Lord, and bargained to be made mortgagor, though no one was to be a whit the wiser. And ten per cent. he was to get from each of his five brothers for the use of the money which next day came back to his own hands.

Thus far all was straight dealing, but with the approach of the time to go to Iceland the complications grew thick. Jacob had so husbanded his money that while seeming to spend he still possessed it, and now he was troubled to know where to lodge that portion of it which he should not want in Iceland and might find it unsafe to take there. And while he was in the throes of his uncertainty his brothers—all save John—were in the travail of their own big conception.

Now Asher, Stean, Ross and Thurstan, having each made up his mind that he would go to Iceland also, had to consider how to get there, for their late bargaining had left them all penniless. The proceeds of the sale of Ballacraigne were lodged with Jacob for Greeba, and Jacob also held as his own what had come to each man from his mortgage. So thinking that Jacob must have more than he could want, they approached him one by one, confidentially and slyly. And wondrous were the lies they told him, for they dare not confess that their sole need of money was to go to Iceland after him, and watch him that he did not cheat them when Greeba sent them all their fortunes in return for their brotherly love of her.

Thus Asher took Jacob aside and whispered, "I'm morthal hard pressed for a matter of five-and-thirty pound, boy—just five-and-thirty, for draining and fencing. I make bold to think you'll lend me the like of it, and six per cent. I'll be paying reglar."

"Ah, I can't do it, Asher," said Jacob, "for old Marky the Lord has stripped me."

Then came Stean, plucking a bit of ling

and looking careless, and he said, "I've got a fine thing on now. I can buy a yoke of ploughing oxen for thirty pound. Only thirty, and a dead bargain. Can you lend me the brass? But whisht's the word, for Ross is sneaking after them."

"Very sorry, Stean," said Jacob, "but Ross has been here before you, and I've just lent him the money."

Ross himself came next, and said, "I borrowed five-and-twenty pound from Stean a bit back, and he's not above threatening to sell me up for a dirty little debt like that. Maybe ye'd tide me over the trouble and say nothing to Stean."

"Make your mind easy, Ross," said Jacob; "Stean told me himself, and I've paid him all you owe him."

So these two went their ways and thereafter eyed each other threateningly, but neither dare explode, for both had their secret fear. And last of all came Thurstan, made well drunk for the better support of his courage, and he maudled and cried, "What d'ye think? Poor Ballabeg is dead—him that used to play the fiddle at church—and the old parson wants

me to take Ballabeg's place up in the gallery loft. Says I'd be wonderful good at the viol-bass. I wouldn't mind doing it neither, only it costs such a power of money, a viol-bass does—twenty pound maybe."

"Well, what of that?" said Jacob, interrupting him, "the parson says he'll lend you the money. He told me so himself."

With such shrewd answers did Jacob escape from the danger of lending to his brothers, whom he could not trust. But he lost no time in going down to Marky the Lord and offering his money to be lent out on interest with good security. Knowing nothing of this, Asher, Stean, Ross, and Thurstan each in his turn stole down to Marky the Lord to borrow the sum he needed. And Marky the Lord kept his own worthy counsel, and showed no unwise eagerness. First he said to Jacob, "I can lend out your money on good security."

"Who to?" said Jacob.

"That I've given my word not to tell. What interest do you want?"

"Not less than twelve per cent.," said the temperate Jacob.

"I'll get it," said Marky the Lord, and Jacob went away with a sly smile.

Then said Marky the Lord to each of the borrowers in turn, "I can find you the money."

"Whose is it?" asked Asher, who came the first.

"That I've sworn not to tell," said Marky the Lord.

"What interest?"

"Only four per cent. to my friend."

"Well, and that's reasonable, and he's a right honest, well-meaning man, whoever he is," said Asher.

"That he is, friend," said Marky the Lord; "but as he had not got the money himself he had to borrow it of an acquaintance, and pay ten per cent. for the convenience."

"So he wants fourteen per cent.?" cried Asher. "Shoo! Lord save us! Oh, the grasping miser. It's outrageous. I'll not pay it—the Nightman fly away with me if I do."

"You need be under no uneasiness about that," said Marky the Lord, "for I've three other borrowers ready to take the money the moment you say you won't."

“Hand it out,” said Asher, and away he went fuming.

Then Stean, Ross, and Thurstan followed, one by one, and each behaved as Asher had done before him. When the transaction was complete, and the time had come to set sail for Iceland, many and wonderful were the shifts of the four who had formed the secret design to conceal their busy preparations. But when all was done, and berths taken, all six in the same vessel, Jacob and Gentleman John rode round the farms of Lague to bid a touching farewell to their brethren.

“Good-bye, Thurstan,” said Jacob, sitting on the cross-board of the cart. “We’ve had arguments in our time, and fallen on some rough harm in the course of them, but we’ll meet for peace and quietness in heaven some day.”

“We’ll meet before that,” thought Thurstan.

And when Jacob and John were gone on towards Ramsey, Thurstan mounted the till-board of his own cart and followed. Meantime Asher, Stean, and Ross were on their journey, and because they did not cross on

the road, they came face to face for the first time, all six together, each lugging his kit of clothes behind him, on the deck of the ship that was to take them to Iceland. Then Jacob's pale face grew livid.

"What does this mean?" he cried.

"It means that we can't trust you," said Thurstan.

"None of you?" said Jacob.

"None of us, seemingly," said Thurstan, glancing round into the confused faces about him.

"What! Not your own brother?" said Jacob.

"Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin,' as the saying is," said Thurstan, with a sneer.

"Poor once, poor for ever,' as the saying is," mocked Jacob. "Last week you hadn't twenty pound to buy your viol-bass to play in the gallery-loft."

Steane laughed at that, and Jacob turned hotly upon him. "And *you* hadn't thirty pound to buy your yoke of oxen that Ross was sneaking after."

Then Ross made a loud guffaw, and Jacob faced about to him. "And maybe *you've* paid

back your dirty five-and-twenty pound that Stean threatened to sell you up for?"

Then Stean glowered hard at Ross, and Ross looked black at Stean, and Asher almost burst his sides with laughter.

"And you too, my dear eldest brother," said Jacob bitterly, "you have the advantage of me in years but not in wisdom. You thought, like the rest of them, to get the money out of me to help you to follow me and watch me. So that was it, was it? But I was too much for you, my dear brother, and you had to go elsewhere for your draining and ditching."

"So I had, bad cess to you," said Asher; "and fourteen per cent. I had to pay for the shabby loan I got."

At that Stean and Ross and Thurstan pricked up their ears.

"And did *you* pay fourteen per cent?" said Stean.

"I did, bad cess to Marky the Lord, and the grasping old miser behind him, whoever he is."

And now it was Jacob's turn to look amazed.

"Wait," he said; "I don't like the look of you."

"Then shut your eyes," said Thurstan.

"Did Marky the Lord lend you the money?" asked Jacob of Asher.

"Ay, he did," said Asher.

"And *you*, too?" said Jacob, turning stiffly to Stean.

"Ay," said Stean.

"And *you*?" said Jacob, facing towards Ross.

"I darn say no," said Ross.

"And *you* as well?" said Jacob, confronting Thurstan.

"Why not?" said Thurstan.

"The blockhead!" cried Jacob. "The scoundrel! It was *my* money—mine—mine, I tell you, and he might as well have pitched it into the sea."

Then the four men began to double their fists.

"Wait!" said Asher. "Are you the grasping young miser that asked fourteen per cent.?"

"He is, clear enough," said Stean.

"Well," said Thurstan, "I really think—"

look you, boys, I really do think, but I speak under correction—I really think, all things considered, this Jacob is a damned rascal.”

“I may have the advantage of him in years,” said Asher, doubling up his sleeves, “but if I can’t”——

“Go to the devil,” said Jacob, and he went below, boiling hot with rage.

It was idle to keep up the quarrel, for very soon all six were out on the high seas, bound to each others’ company at bed and board, and doomed to pass the better part of a month together. So before they came to Iceland they were good friends after their fashion, though that was the fashion of cat and mouse, and being landed at Reykjavík they were once more in their old relations, with Jacob as purse-bearer and spokesman.

“And now listen,” said that thrifty person. “What’s it saying? ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’ We’ve got our bird in the hand, haven’t we?”

“So we have,” said Asher; “six hundred goolden pounds that Ballacraine fetched at the sale.”

“Just so,” said Jacob; “and before we part with it let us make sure about the two in the bush.”

With that intention they started inquiries, as best they could, touching the position of Michael Sunlocks, his salary, and influence. And in spite of the difficulties of language they heard and saw enough to satisfy them. Old Iceland was awakening from a bad dream of three bad centuries and setting to work with a will to become a power in the world; the young President, Michael Sunlocks, was the restorer and protector of her liberties; fame and honour were before him, and before all who laid a hand to his plough. This was what they heard in many jargons on every side.

“It’s all right,” whispered Jacob, “and now for the girl.”

They had landed late in the day of Greeba’s visit to Red Jason at the little house of detention, and had heard of her marriage, of its festivities, and of the attempt on the life of the President. But though they knew that Jason was no longer in Man they were too much immersed in

their own vast schemes to put two and two together, until next morning they came upon the sad procession bound for the Sulphur Mines, and saw that Jason was one of the prisoners. They were then on their way to Government House, and Jacob said with a wink, "Boys, that's worth remembering. When did it do any harm to have two strings to your bow?"

The others laughed at that, and John nudged Thurstan and said, "Isn't he a boy!" And Thurstan grunted and trudged on.

When they arrived at the kitchen door of the house they asked for Greeba by her new name, and after some inarticulate fencing with a fat Icelandic cook, the little English maid was brought down to them.

"Leave her to me," whispered Jacob, and straightway he tackled her.

Could they see the mistress? What about? Well, it was a bit of a private matter, but no disrespect to herself, miss. Aw, yes, they were Englishmen—that's to say, a sort of Englishmen—being Manxmen. Would the mistress know them? Aw, go

bail on that. Eh, boys? Ha! ha! Fact was they were her brothers, miss. Yes, her brothers, all six of them, and longing mortal to clap eyes again on their sweet little sister.

And after that Master Jacob addressed himself adroitly to an important question, and got most gratifying replies. Oh yes, the President loved his young wife beyond words; worshipped the very ground she walked on, as they say. And oh yes, she had great, great influence with him, and he would do anything in the wide world to please her.

"That'll do," whispered Jacob over his shoulder, as the little maid tripped away to inform her mistress. "I'll give that girl a shilling when she comes again," he added.

"And give her another for me," said Stean.

"And me," said Asher.

"Seeing that I've no land at home now, I wouldn't mind staying here when you all go back," said Jacob.

"I'll sell you mine, Jacob," said Thurstan.

The maid returned to ask them to follow, and they went after her, stroking their lank

hair smooth on their foreheads, and studying the remains of the snow on their boots. When they came to the door of the room where they were to meet with Greeba, Jacob whispered to the little maid, "I'll give you a crown when I come out again." Then he twisted his face over his shoulder and said, "Do as I do ; d'ye hear ?"

"*Isn't* he a boy !" chuckled Gentleman John.

Then into the room they passed, one by one, all six in file. Greeba was standing by a table, erect, quivering, with flashing eyes, and the old trembling on both sides her heart. Jacob and John instantly went down on one knee before her, and their four lumbering brethren behind made shift to do the same.

"So we have found you at last, thank God," said Jacob, in a mighty burst of fervour.

"Thank God, thank God," the others echoed.

"Ah, Greeba," said Jacob, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "why ever did you go away without warning, and leave us all so

racked with suspense? You little knew how you grieved us, seeming to slight our love and kindness towards you"—

"Stop," said Greeba. "I know too well what your love and kindness has been to me. Why have you come?"

"Don't say that," said Jacob sadly, "for see what we have made free to fetch you—six hundred pound," he added, lugging a bag and a roll of paper out of his pocket.

"Six hundred goolden pounds," repeated the others.

"It's your share of Lague—your full share, Greeba, woman," said Jacob deliberately, "and every penny of it is yours. So take it, and may it bring you a blessing, Greeba. And don't think unkind of us because we have held it back until now, for we kept it from you for your own good, seeing plain there was some one harking after you for sake of what you had, and fearing your good money would thereby fall into evil hands, and you be made poor and penniless."

"Ay, ay," muttered the others; "that Jason—that Red Jason."

"But he's gone now, and serve him right,"

said Jacob, "and you're wedded to the right man, praise God."

So saying he shambled to his feet, and his brothers did likewise.

But Greeba stood without moving, and said through her compressed lips, "How did you know that I was here?"

"The letter, the letter," Asher blurted out, and Jacob gave him a sidelong look, and then said—

"Ye see, dear, it was this way. When you were gone, and we didn't know where to look for you, and were sore grieved to think you'd maybe left us in anger, not rightly seeing our drift towards you, we could do nothing but sit about and fret for you. And one day we were turning over some things in a box, just to bring back the memory of you, when what should we find but a letter writ to you by the good man himself."

"Ay, Sunlocks—Michael Sunlocks," said Stean.

"And a right good man he is, beyond gainsay; and he knows how to go through life, and I always said it," said Asher.

And Jacob continued, "So said I; 'Boys,'

I said, 'now we know where she is, and that by this time she must have married the man she ought, let's do the right by her and sell Ballacraigne, and take her the money and give her joy.'"

"So you did, so you did," said John.

"And we sold it dirt cheap, too," said Jacob, "but you're not the loser; no, for here is a full seventh of all Lague straight to your hand."

"Give me the money," said Greeba.

"And there it is, dear," said Jacob, fumbling the notes and the gold to count them, while his brethren, much gratified by this sign of Greeba's complacency, began to stretch their legs from the easy-chairs about them.

"Ah, and a pretty penny it has cost us to fetch it," said John. "We've had to pinch ourselves to do it, I can tell you."

"How much has it cost you?" said Greeba.

"No matter of that," interrupted Jacob, with a lofty sweep of the hand.

"Let me pay you back what you have spent in coming," said Greeba.

“Not a pound of it,” said Jacob. “What’s a matter of forty or fifty pound to any of us, compared to doing what’s right by our own flesh and blood?”

“Let me pay you,” said Greeba, turning to Asher, and Asher was for holding out his hand, but Jacob, coming behind him, tugged at his coat, and so he drew back and said—

“Aw, no, child, no; I couldn’t touch it for my life.”

“Then *you*,” said Greeba to Thurstan, and Thurstan looked as hungry as a gull at the bait that was offered him, but just then Jacob was coughing most lamentably. So with a wry face, that was all colours at once, Thurstan answered, “Aw, Greeba, woman, do you really think a poor man has got no feelings? Don’t press it, woman. You’ll hurt me.”

Recking nothing of these refusals, Greeba tried each of the others in turn, and getting the same answer from all she wheeled about, saying, “Very well, be it so,” and quickly locked the money in the drawer of a cabinet. This done, she said sharply, “Now you can go.”

"Go?" they cried, looking up from their seats in bewilderment.

"Yes," she said, "before my husband returns."

"Before he returns?" said Jacob. "Why, Greeba, we wish to see him!"

"You had better not wait," said Greeba. "He might remember what you appear to forget."

"Why," said Jacob, with every accent of incredulity, "and isn't he our brother, so to say, brought up in the house of our own father?"

"And he knows what you did for our poor father, who wouldn't lie shipwrecked now but for your heartless cruelties," said Greeba.

"Greeba, lass, Greeba, lass," Jacob protested, "don't say he wouldn't take kind to the own brothers of his own wife."

"He also knows what you did for her," said Greeba, "and the sorry plight you brought her to."

"What!" cried Jacob, "you never mean to say you are going to show an ungrateful spirit, Greeba, after all we've brought you?"

"Small thanks to you for that, after defrauding me so long," said Greeba.

"What! Keeping you from marrying that cheating knave?" cried Jacob.

"You kept me from nothing but my just rights," said Greeba. "Now go—go."

Her words fell on them like swords that smote them hip and thigh, and like sheep they huddled together with looks of amazement and fear.

"Why, Greeba, you don't mean to turn us out of the house?" said Jacob.

"And if I do," said Greeba, "it is no more than you did for our dear old father, but less; for that house was his, while this is mine, and you ought to be ashamed to show your wicked faces inside its doors."

"Oh, the outrageous little atomy," cried Asher.

"This is the thanks you get for crossing the seas to pay people what there was never no call to give them," said Stean.

"Oh, bad cess to it all," cried Ross, "I'll take what it cost me to come, and get away straight. Give it me, and I'm off."

"No," said Greeba, "I'll have no half

measures. You refused what I offered you, and now you shall have nothing."

"Och, the sly slut, the crafty young minx," cried Ross, "to get a hold of the money first."

"Hush, boys, leave it to me," said Jacob. "Greeba," he said, in a voice of deep sorrow, "I never should have believed it of you—you that was always so kind and loving to strangers, not to speak of your own kith and kin"—

"Stop that," cried Greeba, lifting her head proudly, her eyes flashing, and the woman all over aflame. "Do you think I don't see through your paltry schemes? You defrauded me when I was poor and at your mercy, and now when you think I am rich, and could do you a service, you come to me on your knees. But I spurn you, you mean, grovelling men, you that impoverished my father and then turned your backs upon him, you that plotted against my husband and would now lick the dust under his feet. Get out of my house, and never darken my doors again. Come here no more, I tell you, or I will disown you. Go—go!"

And just as sheep they had huddled together, so as sheep she swept them out before her. They trooped away through the kitchen and past the little English maid, but their eyes were down and they did not see her.

"Did ye give her that crown piece?" asked Thurstan, looking into Jacob's eyes. But Jacob said nothing—he only swore a little.

"The numskull!" muttered Thurstan. "The tomfool! The booby! The moon-calf! The jobbernowl! I was a fool to join his crack-brained scheme."

"I always said it would come to nothing," said Asher, "and we've thrown away five-and-thirty pounds apiece, and fourteen per cent. for the honour of doing it."

"It's his money, though—the grinding young miser—and may he whistle till he gets it," said Thurstan.

"Oh yes, you are a pretty pack of wise asses, you are," said Jacob bitterly. "Money thrown away, is it? You've never been so near to your fortune in your life."

"How is that?" asked the other five at once.

"How is it that Red Jason has gone to prison? For threatening Michael Sunlocks? Very likely," said Jacob, with a curl of the lip.

"What then?" said John.

"For threatening herself," said Jacob. "She has lied about it."

"And what if she has? Where's our account in that?" said Asher.

"Where? Why, with her husband," said Jacob, and four distinct whistles answered him.

"You go bail Michael Sunlocks knows less than we know," Jacob added, "and maybe we might tell him something that would be worth a trifle."

"What's that?" asked John.

"That she loved Red Jason, and ought to have married him," said Jacob; "but threw him up after they had been sweethearting together, because he was poor, and then came to Iceland and married Michael Sunlocks because he was rich."

"Chut! Numscull again! He'd never believe you," said Thurstan.

"Would he not?" said Jacob. "Then

maybe he would believe his own eyes. Look there," and he drew a letter out of his pocket.

It was the abandoned letter that Greeba wrote to Jason.

"*Isn't* he a boy!" chuckled Gentleman John.

Two days longer they stayed at Reykjavík, and rambled idly about the town, much observed by the Icelanders and Danes for their monkey jackets of blue Manx cloth, and great sea-boots up to their thighs. Early on the afternoon of the second day they sighted, from the new embankment where they stood and watched the masons, a ship coming up the firth from the Smoky Point. It was a brig, with square sails set, and as she neared the port she ran up a flag to the masthead. The flag was the banner of the Vikings, a white falcon on a blue ground, and the Fairbrothers noticed that at the next moment it was answered by a like flag on the flagstaff of Government House.

"He's coming, he's yonder," said Jacob, flapping his hands under his armpits to warm them.

In a few minutes they saw that there was a flutter over the smooth surface of the life of the town, and that small groups of people were trooping down to the jetty. Half an hour later the brig ran into harbour, dropped anchor below the lava reef, and sent its small boat ashore. Three men sat in the boat; the two sailors who rowed, and a gentleman who sat on the seat between them. The gentleman was young, flaxen-haired, tall, slight, with a strong yet winsome face, and clad in a fox-skin coat and close fitting squirrel-skin cap. When the boat grounded by the jetty he leapt ashore with a light spring, smiled and nodded to the many who touched their hats to him, hailed others with a hearty word, and then swung into the saddle of a horse that stood waiting for him, and rode away at an eager trot in the direction of Government House.

It was Michael Sunlocks.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARDON.

WHEN the men whom Michael Sunlocks sent into the interior after Adam Fairbrother and his shipwrecked company returned to him empty-handed, he perceived that they had gone astray by crossing a great firth lying far east of Hekla when they should have followed the course of it down to the sea. So, counting the time that had been wasted, he concluded to take ship to a point of the southern coast in the latitude of the Westmann Islands, thinking to meet old Adam somewhere by the firth's mouth. The storm delayed him, and he reached the firth too late; but he came upon some good news of Adam there: that all well, though sore beset by the hard weather, and enfeebled by the misfortunes that had befallen them, the little band of shipbroken men had, three days before his own coming, passed up the western

bank of the firth on foot, going slowly and heavily laden, but under the safe charge of a guide from Seydisfiord.

Greatly cheered in heart at these good tidings, Michael Sunlocks had ordered a quick return, for it was unsafe, and perhaps impossible, to follow up through the narrow chasms of the firth in a ship under sail. On getting back to Reykjavík he intended to take ponies across country in the direction of Thingvellir, hoping to come upon old Adam and his people before they reached the lake or the great chasm on the western side of the valley, known as the Chasm of All Men.

And thinking, amid the flutter of joyful emotions, that on the overland journey he would surely take Greeba with him, for he could never bear to be so long parted from her again, all his heart went back to her in sweet visions as his ship sped over the sea. Her beauty, her gentleness, her boldness, her playful spirits, and all her simple loving ways came flowing over him wave after wave, and then in one great swelling flood. And in the night watches, looking over the dark waters, and hearing nothing but their deep

moan, he could scarce believe his fortune, being so far away from the sight of her light figure, and from the hearing of her sweet voice, that she was his——his love, his wife, his darling. A hundred tender names he would call her then, having no ear to hear him but the melancholy waves, no tongue to echo him but the wailing wind, and no eye to look upon him but the eye of night.

And many a time on that homeward voyage, while the sails bellowed out to the fair breeze that was carrying him to her, he asked himself how he had been able to live so long without her, and whether he could live without her now, if evil chance plunged his great happiness into greater grief. Thinking so, he recalled the day of her coming, and the message he got from the ship in the harbour saying she had come before her time, and how he had hastened down, and into the boat, and across the bay, and aboard, with a secret trembling lest the years might have so changed her as to take something from her beauty, or her sweetness, or her goodness, or yet the bounding playfulness that was half the true girl's

charm. But, oh, the delicious undeceiving of that day, when, coming face to face with her again, he saw the rosy tint in her cheek and the little delicate dimple sucked into it when she smiled, and the light footstep, and the grace of motion, and the swelling throat, and the heaving bosom, and the quivering lids over the most glorious eyes that ever shone upon this earth! So, at least, it had seemed to him then, and still it seemed so as his ship sailed home.

At Smoky Point they lay off an hour or two to take in letters for the capital, and there intelligence had come aboard of the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Jason for his design and attempt upon the life of the President. Michael Sunlocks had been greatly startled and deeply moved by the news, and called on the master to weigh anchor without more delay than was necessary, because he had now a double reason for wishing to be back in Reykjavík.

And being at length landed he galloped up to Government House, bounded indoors with the thought of his soul speaking out of his eyes, and found Greeba there and every

one of his sweetest visions realised. All his hundred tender, foolish, delicious names he called her over again, but with better ears to hear them, while he enfolded her in his arms, with both her own about his neck, and her beautiful head nestling close over his shoulder, and her fluttering breast against his breast.

"Dearest," he whispered, "my darling, love of my life, however could I leave you so long?"

"Michael," she whispered back, "if you say any more I shall be crying."

But the words were half smothered by sobs, for she was crying already. Seeing this, he sheered off on another tack, telling her of his mission in search of her father, and that if he had not brought the good man back, at least he had brought good news of him, and saying that they were both to start to-morrow for Thingvellir with the certainty of meeting him and bringing him home with great rejoicings.

"And now, my love, I have a world of things to attend to before I can go," said Michael Sunlocks, "and you have to prepare for two days in the saddle over the snow."

Greeba had been smiling through the big drops that floated in her eyes, but she grew solemn again, and said—

“Ah, Michael, you cannot think what trouble we have all had while you have been away.”

“I know it—I know all,” said Michael Sunlocks, “so say no more about it, but away to your room, my darling.”

With that he rang a hand-bell that stood on the table, and Oscar, his servant, answered the call.

“Go across to the jail,” he said, “and tell Jón that his prisoner is not to be removed until he has had orders from me.”

“What prisoner, your Excellency?” said Oscar.

“The prisoner known as Jason,” said Michael Sunlocks.

“He’s gone, your Excellency,” cried Oscar.

“Gone?”

“I mean to the Sulphur Mines, your Excellency.”

“When was he sent?”

“Yesterday morning, at daybreak, your Excellency.”

Michael Sunlocks sat at a table and wrote a few lines, and handed them to his man, saying, "Then take this to the Speaker, and say I will wait here until he comes."

While this was going forward Greeba had been standing by the door with a troubled look, and when Oscar was gone from the room she returned to her husband's side, and said, with great gravity, "Michael, what are you going to do with that man?"

But Michael Sunlocks only waved his hand, and said, "Nay, now, darling, you shall not trouble about this matter any more. It is my affair, and it is for me to see to it."

"But he has threatened your life," cried Greeba.

"Now, love, what did I say?" said Michael Sunlocks, with uplifted finger and a pretence at reproof. "You've fretted over this foolish thing too long; so think no more about it, and go to your room."

She turned to obey.

"And, darling," he cried, in another voice, as she was slowly going, "that I may seem to have you with me all the same, just sing something, and I shall hear you while I

work. Will you? There!" he cried, and laughed before she had time to answer. "See what a goose you have made of me!"

She came back, and for reply she kissed his forehead, and he put his lips to her lovely hand. Then, with a great lump in her throat, and the big drops rolling from her eyes to her cheeks, she left him to the work she sorely feared.

And being alone, and the candles lighted and the blinds drawn down, for night had now fallen in, he sat at the table to read the mass of letters that had gathered in his absence. There was no communication of any kind from the Government at Copenhagen, and satisfying himself on this point, and thinking for the fiftieth time that surely Denmark intended, as she ought, to leave the people of world-old Iceland to govern themselves, he turned with a sigh of relief to the strange, bewildering, humorous, pathetic, hodge-podge of petitions, complaints, requests, demands and threats that came from every quarter of the island itself. And while he laughed and looked grave, and muttered, and made louder exclamations over these, as

one by one they passed under his eye, suddenly the notes of a harpsichord, followed shortly by the sweeter notes of a sweet voice, came to him from another room, and with the tip of his pen to his lips, he dropped back in his chair to listen.

"My own song," he thought, and his eyelids quivered—

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine.
O leave a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine ;
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine ;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine."

It was Greeba singing to him as he had bidden her.

"God bless her," he thought again in the silence that followed.

Ah, little did he think as he listened to her song that the eyes of the singer were wet, and that her heart was eating itself out with fears.

"What have I done to deserve such happiness?" he asked himself. But just as it happens that at the moment when our

passionate joy becomes conscious of itself we find some dark misgivings creep over us of evil about to befall, so the bounding gladness of Michael Sunlocks was followed by a chill dread that he tried to put aside and could not.

It was at that moment that the Speaker entered the room. He was very tall and slight, and had a large head that drooped like a daffodil. His dress was poor, he was short-sighted, growing elderly, and silent of manner. Nothing in his appearance or bearing would have suggested that he had any pride in his place as Judge of the island. He was a bookworm, a student, a scholar, and learned in the old Sagas and Eddas.

"Speaker," said Michael Sunlocks, with simple deference, "I have sent for you on a subject of some moment to myself."

"Name it!" said the Judge.

"During my absence a man has been tried and condemned by the Bishop's Court for threatening and attempting my life," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Jason, the son of Stephen Orry and

Rachel, daughter of the late Governor-General Jorgensen," said the Judge.

"That is he, and I want you to give me an opinion respecting him," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Gladly," said the Judge.

"He has been sent to the Sulphur Mines," said Michael Sunlocks.

"For twelve months, certain," said the Judge.

"Can we recall him and have him tried afresh by the Court of the Quarter and High Court of Justice?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"Too late for that," said the Judge. "A higher court, if it had condemned him at all, which is doubtful, might certainly have given him a longer punishment, but his sentence of twelve months is coupled with a condition that he shall hereafter take the Oath of Peace towards you. So have no fear of him."

"I have none at all," said Michael Sunlocks, "as my next question will show."

"What is it?" said the Judge.

"Can I pardon him?" said Michael Sunlocks.

For a moment the Speaker was startled out of his placid manner, but recovering his composure he answered, "Yes, the President has sovereign powers of pardon."

"Then, Speaker," said Michael Sunlocks, "will you see the needful papers drawn for my signature?"

"Surely," said the Judge. "But, first, will you pardon *me*?" he added, with a shadow of a smile.

"Say what you please, Speaker," said Michael Sunlocks.

"It is possible that you do not yet know the nature of the evidence given at the trial," said the Judge.

"I think I do," said Michael Sunlocks.

"That this man claims to be your half-brother."

"He *is* my brother."

"That he thinks you have stood in his place?"

"I *have* stood in his place."

"That he is jealous of you, and in his madness has vowed to slay you?"

"His jealousy is natural, and his vow I do not dread."

The cold-mannered Speaker paused a moment, wiped his short-sighted eyes with his red print handkerchief, and then said in a husky voice, "This is very noble of you. I'll go at once for the document."

He had only just gone from the room when Greeba returned to it. She had tried too long to conquer her agitation and could not, and now with wide eyes and a look of fear in them she hastened back to her husband the moment the Speaker had left him.

"Michael," she cried, "what has the Speaker gone for?"

"For a form of pardon," he answered.

"Pardon for that man?" she asked.

"Even so," he said, "and I have promised to sign it."

"O Michael, my love!—my dear, kind Michael!" she cried, in a pitiful voice of entreaty, "don't do it, don't, I pray of you—don't bring that man back."

"Why, Greeba, what is this?" said Michael Sunlocks. "What is it troubles my little woman?"

"Dear Michael," she cried once more, "for

your own sake think again before you sign that pardon."

"Ah, I see," said he, "my darling has been all unstrung by this ugly business. Yes, and now I remember what they told me down at Smoky Point. It was my love herself that gave the poor lad up to justice. That was very brave of my darling; for her husband, bless her dear heart, was before all the world to her. Ah, yes, I know that all her love is mine, her love is first and last with her, as with all warm natures. But she must not fear for me. No, she must not worry, but go back like a dear soul, and leave this matter to me."

"Michael, my dear, noble Michael, I have something to say; will you not hear me?"

"No, no, no," he answered.

"Not for a moment? I have set my heart on telling you."

"Not for one little moment. But if you have set your heart on anything else, then, my darling, just think of it double, whatever it is, and it is yours already."

"But why may I not speak of this pardon?"

“Because, though I have never yet set eyes upon this poor man, I know more about him than my darling can ever know, and because it is natural that her sweet little heart, that is as brave as a lion for herself but as timid as a fawn for me, should exaggerate my peril. So now, no more words about it, but go, go.”

She was about to obey when the maid came to say that dinner was ready. And then with a little shout of joy Michael Sunlocks threw down his papers, encircled his arm about Greeba's waist, and drew her along laughing, with her smiles fighting their way through her tears.

During the dinner he talked constantly of the dangers and trials and amusing mischances of his voyage, laughing at them all now they were over, and laughing at Greeba too for the woful face with which she heard of them. And when they rose from the table he called on her for another song, and she sat at the harpsichord and sang, though often her heart was in her mouth. But he recked nothing of this, and only laughed when her sweet voice failed her,

and filled up the breaks with his own rich tones.

In the midst of this singing the maid came in and said something which Michael Sunlocks did not catch, for it was drowned to his ear by the gladsome uproar that he himself was waking; but Greeba heard it and stopped playing, and presently the Speaker entered the room.

"A good thing is no worse for being done betimes," said the Judge, "so here is the pardon ready to your hand for signature."

And with that he handed a paper to Michael Sunlocks, who said with cheer, "You're right, Speaker, you're right; and my wife will give you a glass of wine while I write you my name."

"A cup of coffee, if you are taking it," said the Judge, with a bow to Greeba, who saw nothing of it, for her eyes were following her husband.

"Michael," she said, "I beseech you not to sign that paper. Only give way to me this once; I have never asked you before, and I will never ask you again. I am in earnest, Michael dear, and if you will not

yield to me for your own sake yield to me for mine."

"How is this? How grave we are!" said Michael Sunlocks, pausing with pen in hand.

"I know I have no right to meddle in such matters, but dear Michael, don't sign that pardon—don't bring that man back. I beseech you, I beg of you."

"This is very strange," said Michael Sunlocks.

"It is also very simple," said the Judge, bringing his red handkerchief up to his dim eyes again.

"What!" said Michael Sunlocks. "Greeba, you do not know this man—this Jason?"

Greeba hesitated a moment, and glanced at the Speaker.

"You don't know him?" repeated Michael Sunlocks.

She was sorely tempted, and she fell. "For my husband's sake," she thought, and then with a prayer for pardon she lifted her head and said falteringly, "No, no—why, no, of course not."

Michael Sunlocks was satisfied. "'Why

no, of course not,'” he echoed, laughing a little, and then he dipped his quill in the ink-horn.

“But I beseech you again, do not bring that man back,” she cried.

There was a painful pause, and to cover it the Speaker said, “Your husband is a brave-hearted man, who does not know the name of fear.”

And then Michael Sunlocks said, “I will ask your pardon, Speaker, while I step into the next room with my wife. I have something to tell her. Come, Greeba, come. I’ll leave the document with you for the present, Speaker,” he added over his shoulder as he passed out. Greeba walked beside him with downcast eyes, like a guilty thing condemned.

“Now, love,” he said, when they were alone, “it is sweet and beautiful of you to think so much of me, but there is something that you do not know, and I ought to tell you. Maybe I hinted at it in my letter, but there has never been a chance to explain. Have you heard that this Jason is my brother?”

“Yes,” said Greeba faintly.

“It is true,” said Michael Sunlocks. “And you know that when I first came to Iceland it was not to join the Latin School, but on an errand of mercy?”

“Yes,” said Greeba.

“Well, the first of my duties was to find Jason’s mother, and the next was to find Jason himself.”

“Jason!” cried Greeba.

“Yes, it was my father who sent me, for they had suffered much through his great fault, God forgive him, and I was to succour them in their distress. You know what followed?”

“Yes,” said Greeba softly.

“I came too late for the mother; the good woman was in her grave. I could not light upon her son, and lent an ear to the idle story that he was dead also. My search ceased, my zeal flagged, and putting aside the solemn promise I made my father, I went on with my own affairs. But I never believed that he was dead, and I felt I should live to meet with him yet.”

“Oh! oh!” cried Greeba.

“And many a time since my conscience has reproached me with a mission unfulfilled, and awakening from many a dream of the hour and the place wherein I pledged my word to him that died trusting me, loving me, doting on me—Heaven pity him, bad man though he was—as never a son was loved by a father before, it has not appeased me to say to myself, “Michael, while you are here, given up to your ambitions, he is there amid the perils and hardships of the sea, and he is your brother, and the only kinsman left to you in the wide world.’”

Greeba was sobbing by this time.

“And now, my darling, you know all, and why I wish to sign this pardon. Could I ever know a moment's happiness with my brother slaving like a beast in yonder mines? What if he is jealous of me, and if his jealousy has driven him to madness? There is a sense in which he is right. But whether right or wrong, mad or sane, he shall not be punished for my sake. So, dearest love, my darling, dry your beautiful eyes, and let me ease my conscience the only way I may, for I have no fear, and my wife must have none.”

"Sunlocks," said Greeba, "you have made me ashamed. I am no fit wife for a man like you. I am too little-hearted. Oh, why did I ever come? Why? Why?" And she wept as if her heart would break. He comforted her with tender protests, enfolding her in his arms and caressing her lovely head.

"Tell me," he whispered, "nay, there, hide your face in my breast. There, there, tell me now—tell me all."

"Sunlocks," she said, drawing back, "I have lied to you."

"Lied?"

"When I told you I had not known Jason I told you what was false."

"Then you have known him?"

"Yes, I knew him in the Isle of Man."

"The Isle of Man?"

"He lived there nearly five years."

"All the time he was away?"

"Yes, he landed the night you sailed. You crossed him on the sea."

"Greeba, why did he go there? Yet how should you know?"

"I do know, Michael—it was to fulfil his

vow—his vow that the old priest spoke of in court—his wicked vow of vengeance.”

“On my father?”

“On your father and on you.”

“God in heaven!” cried Michael Sunlocks, with great awe. “And that very night my father was saved from his own son by death.”

“It was he who saved your father from the sea.”

“Wait,” said Michael Sunlocks; “did you know of this vow before you accused him of an attempt upon me?”

Greeba caught her breath, and answered, “Yes.”

“Did you know of it while you were still in the Isle of Man?”

“Yes,” she answered again, more faintly.

“Did he tell you?”

“Yes, and he bound me by a promise never to speak of it, but I could not keep it from my own husband.”

“That’s strange,” said Michael Sunlocks, with a look of pain. “To share a secret like that with you was very strange,” he added.

Greeba was flurried, and said again, too bewildered to see which way her words were

tending, "And he gave me his promise in return to put aside his sinful purpose."

"That's still stranger," said Michael Sunlocks. "Greeba," he added, in another tone, "why should you say you did not know Jason?"

"Because the Speaker was with us."

"But why, my girl? Why?"

"Lest evil rumours might dishonour my husband."

"But where was the dishonour to me in my wife knowing this poor lad, Greeba?"

At that she hesitated a moment, and then in a tone of gentle reproof she said, nestling close to him and caressing his sleeve, "Michael, why do you ask such questions?"

He did not turn aside for that, but looked searchingly into her face, and said, "He was nothing to you, was he?"

She hesitated again, and then tried to laugh. "Why, what should he be to me?" she said.

He did not flinch; but repeated, "He was nothing to you then?"

"Nobody save my husband has ever been anything to me," she said, with a caress.

"He was nothing to you—no?"

"No," she answered, throwing back her head.

Just then the English maid came to say that the six big Englishmen who had been there before were in the kitchen again, and asking to see her master, not her mistress, this time. In an instant Greeba's little burst of disdain was spent, and she was all humility and entreaty.

"Don't go to them," she cried. "Don't listen to them."

"Who are they?" he asked.

"My brothers. I have not had time to tell you, but I will tell you now."

She put her arms about his neck as if to hold him.

"What have they come for?"

"To tell you some falsehood, and so revenge themselves on me. I know it, I feel it. Ah, a woman's instinct is sure. But, dear Michael, you will not receive them. Refuse, and I will tell you such a story And you will laugh"——

"Let me go, Greeba," he said, unloosing the grip of her tightening arms, and at the

next moment he was gone from the room. Then all the spirit of the woman arose in Greeba, and throwing aside her vague fears, she resolved, as only a woman could, in the cruel hour when a dear heart seemed to be slipping away from her, that come what would she should hold to her husband at all hazards, and that whatever her brothers might say against her, let it be true or false, if it threatened to separate her from him she must deny it. What matter about the truth? Her love was before everything. And who was to disprove her word? Jason alone could do so, and his tongue was sealed for ever in a silence as deep as that of the grave.

Michael Sunlocks went out of the room like a man in a dream: an ugly dream, a dream of darkening terrors undefined. He came back to it like one who has awakened to find that his dream has come true. Within an hour his face seemed to have grown old. He stooped, he stumbled on the floor, his limbs shook under him, he was a broken and sorrowful man. At sight of him Greeba could scarcely restrain an impulse to scream

She ran to him, and cried, "Michael, husband, what have they told you?"

At first he looked stupidly into her quivering face, and then glancing down at a paper he held in one hand he made an effort to conceal it behind him. She was too quick for him, and cried, "What is it? Show it me."

"It's nothing," he said; "nothing, love, nothing"——

"What have they told you?" she said again. "Tell me—tell me."

"They say that you loved Jason," he answered with a great effort.

"It's a lie," she cried stoutly.

"They say that you were to marry him."

She tried to answer as stoutly as before, "And that's a lie, too," but the words stuck in her throat.

"O God!" he cried, and turned away from her.

There was a stove in the room, and he stepped up to it, opened the iron door, and thrust the paper into the crackling fire.

"What is that you are burning?" she cried. And in another moment, before he

knew what she was doing, she had run to the stove, pulled back with her bare hands the hot door that he was closing with the tongs, thrust her arm into the fire, and brought out the paper. It was in flames, and she rolled it in her palms until little but its charred remains lay in her scorched fingers. But she saw what it had been—her own abandoned letter to Red Jason. Then, slowly looking up, she turned back to her husband, pale, trembling, a fearful chill creeping over her, and he had thrown himself down on a chair by the table and hidden his face in his arms.

It was a pitiful and moving sight. To see that man, so full of hope and love and simple happy trust a little hour ago, lie there with bent head and buried eyes, and hands clasped together convulsively, because the idol he had set up for himself lay broken before him, because the love wherein he lived lay dead; and to see that woman, so beautiful, and in heart so true, though dogged by the malice of evil chance, though weak as a true woman may be, stand over him with whitening lips, and not a word to utter—to

see this was to say, "What devil of hell weaves the web of circumstance in this world of God?"

Then, with a cry of love and pain in one she flung herself on her knees beside him, and enfolded him in her arms. "Michael," she said, "my love, my darling, my dear kind husband, forgive me, and let me confess everything. It is true that I was to have married Jason, but it is not true that I loved him. I esteemed him, for he is of a manly, noble soul, and after the departure of my father and the death of my mother, and amid the cruelties of my brothers and your own long, long silence, I thought to reward him for his great fidelity. Only think, I was so helpless and bewildered and alone, and I accepted his bargain, but I loved you, you only, only you, dear Michael. And when your letter reached me at last I asked him to release me that I might come to you, and he set me free, and I came. This is the truth, dear Michael, as sure as we shall meet before God some day."

Michael Sunlocks lifted his face and said, "Why did you not tell me this long ago,

Greeba, and not now when it is dragged from you?"

She did not answer him, for to be met with such a question after a plea so abject stung her to the quick. "Do you not believe I've told you the truth?" she asked.

"God knows I know not what to believe," he answered.

"Do you rather trust my brothers, who have deceived you?" she said.

"So, Heaven help me, has my wife, whom I have loved so dear."

At that she drew herself up. "Michael," she said, "what lie have these men told you? Don't keep it from me. What have I done?"

"Married me, while loving him," he answered. "That's enough for me, God pity me."

"Do you believe that?" she said.

"Your concealments, your deceptions, your subterfuges all prove it," he said. "Oh, it is killing me, for it is the truth."

"So you believe that?" she said.

"If I had not written you would now be Jason's wife," he said. "And by this light I

see his imprisonment. It was you who accused him of a design upon my life. Why? Because you knew what he had confessed to you. For your own ends you used his oath against him, knowing he could not deny it. And what was your purpose? To put him away. Why? Because he was pursuing you for deserting him. But you made his vow your excuse, and the brave lad said nothing. No, not a word; and yet he might have dishonoured you before them all. And when I wished to sign his pardon you tried to prevent me. Was that for my sake? No, but yours. Was it my life you thought to protect? No, but your own secret."

Thus in the agony of his tortured heart the hot hard words came from him in a torrent, but before the flood of them was spent, Greeba stepped up to him with flashing eyes, and all the wrath in her heart that comes of outraged love, and cried—

"It is false. It is false, I say. Send for him, and he himself will deny it. I can trust him, for he is of a noble soul. Yes, he is a man indeed. I challenge you to send for

him. Let him come here. Bring him before me, and he shall judge between us."

"No," said Michael Sunlocks, "I will not send for him."

Then there was a knock at the door, and after a pause the Speaker entered, with his stoop and uncertain glance. "Excuse me," he said, "will you sign the pardon now, or leave it until the morning?"

"I will not sign it at all," said Michael Sunlocks. But at the next moment he cried, "Wait! After all, it is not the man's fault, and he shall not suffer."

With that he took the paper out of the Speaker's hand and signed it hurriedly. "There," he said, "see that the man is set free immediately."

The Speaker looked at both of them out of his near-sighted eyes, coughed slightly, and left the room without a word more.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRESIDENT OR THE MAN.

I.

WHEN the Fairbrothers left Government House after their dirty work was done, Jacob was well content with himself, but his brothers were still grumbling.

“He didn’t seem anyways keen to believe it,” Thurstan muttered.

“Leave him alone for that,” said Jacob. “Did ye see when I gave him the letter?”

“Shoo! I wouldn’t trust but she’ll persuade him she never writ it,” said Thurstan.

“He’s got it anyways, and we’ve nothing to show for it,” said Stean.

“And noways powerful grateful either. And where’s the fortune that was coming straight to our hand?” said Ross.

“Chut, man, there’s nothing for us in his mighty schame,” said Thurstan.

"I always said so," said Asher; "and five-and-thirty pounds of good money thrown into the sea."

"Go on," said Jacob with a lofty smile, "go on, don't save your breath for your porridge," and he trudged along ahead of his brethren. Presently he stopped, faced about to them, and said, "Boys, you're mighty sure that nothing is coming of this schame," with a look of high disdain at Thurstan.

"Sure as death and the taxman," sneered Thurstan.

"Then there's a boat sailing for Dublin at high water, and I'll give five-and-thirty pounds apiece to every man of you that likes to go home with her."

At that there was an uneasy scraping of five pairs of feet, and much hum-ing and ha-ing and snuffling.

"Quick, which of you is it to be? Speak out, and don't all speak at once," said Jacob.

Then Asher, with a look of outraged reason, said, "What! and all our time go for nothing, and the land lying fallow for

months, and the winter cabbage not down, and the men's wages going on?"

"You won't take it?" said Jacob.

"A paltry five-and-thirty, why, no," said Asher.

"Then let's have no more of your badgering," said Jacob.

"But, Jacob, tell us where's our account in all this jeel with the girl and the Governor," said Gentleman John.

"Find it out," said Jacob, with a flip of finger and thumb, as he strode on again before his brothers.

"Aw, lave him alone," said Stean. "He's got his shame."

II.

Next morning before the light was yet good, and while the warm vapour was still rising into the chill air from the waters of the firth, Michael Sunlocks sat at work in the room that served him for office and study. His cheeks were pale, his eyes were heavy, and his whole countenance was haggard. But there was a quiet strength

in his slow glance and languid step that seemed to say that in spite of the tired look of age about his young face and lissome figure he was a man of immense energy, power of mind and purpose.

His man Oscar was bustling in and out of the room on many errands. Oscar was a curly-headed youth of twenty, with a happy upward turn of the corners of the mouth, and little twinkling eyes full of a bright fire.

The lad knew that there was something amiss with his master, and by some queer twist of nature that circumstance gave a fillip to his natural cheerfulness.

Michael Sunlocks would send Oscar across the way to the house of the Speaker, and at the next moment forget that he had done so, touch the bell, walk over to the stove, stir the fire, and when the door opened behind him deliver his order a second time without turning round. It would be the maid who had answered the bell, and she would say, "If you please, your Excellency, Oscar has gone out. You sent him across to the Speaker." And then

Michael Sunlocks would bethink himself and say, "True, true; you are quite right."

He would write his letters twice, and sometimes fold them without sealing them; he would read a letter again and again and not grasp its contents. His coffee and toast that had been brought in on a tray lay untouched until both were cold, though they had been set to stand on the top of the stove. He would drop his pen to look vacantly out at the window, cross the room without an object, stand abruptly and seem to listen.

The twinkling eyes of young Oscar saw something of this, and when the little English maid stopped the lad in the long passage and questioned him of his master's doings, he said with a mighty knowing smirk that the President was showing no more sense and feeling and gumption that morning than a tortoise within its shell.

Towards noon the Fairbrothers asked for Michael Sunlocks, and were shown into his room. They entered with many bows and scrapes, and much stroking of their fore-

locks. Michael Sunlocks received them gravely, with an inclination of the head but no words.

"We make so bold as to come to see you again," said Jacob, "for we've got lands at us lying fallow—the lot of us, bar myself maybe—and we must be getting back and putting a sight on them."

Michael Sunlocks bowed slightly.

"We've lost a good crop by coming," said Jacob, "and made no charge neither, though it's small thanks you get in this world for doing what's fair and honest."

"Well?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"She never was good to them that was good to her," said Jacob, "and we're taking sorrow to see that we're not the only ones that suffer from her ingratitude."

"Not another word on that head," said Michael Sunlocks. "What do you want?"

"Want? Well, it isn't so mortal kind to say *Want*," said Jacob.

"A man may be poor, but a poor man has got feelings," said Asher.

"Poor or rich, I say again, 'What do you want?'" said Michael Sunlocks.

"Only to say that we're going to keep this little thing quiet," said Jacob.

"Aw, quiet, quiet," said the others.

"I must leave that to you," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Aw, and safe, too," said Jacob; "for what for should we be going disgracing our own sister? It isn't natural, and her the wife of the President, too."

"Aw, no, no," said the brethren.

"He won't hear a word against her for all," whispered John to Jacob.

"A girl may be a bit wild, and doing sweethearting before she was married," said Jacob, "but that is no reason why all the world should be agate of her, poor thing; and what's it saying, 'The first slip is always forgotten?'"

"Silence," said Michael Sunlocks sternly. "If this is what you have come to say, we can cut this meeting short."

"Lord-a-massy," cried Asher. "Is he for showing us the door, too?"

"Who says so?" said Jacob, changing his tone. Then facing about to Michael Sunlocks, he said, "It wouldn't do to be

known that the President of Iceland had married a bad woman—would it?”

Michael Sunlocks did not reply, and Jacob answered himself. “No, of course not. So perhaps you’ll give me back that letter I lent you yesterday?”

“I haven’t got it. It is destroyed,” said Michael Sunlocks.

“Destroyed!” cried Jacob.

“Make yourself easy about it,” said Michael Sunlocks. “It will do no more mischief. It’s burnt. I burnt it myself.”

“Burnt it!” Jacob exclaimed. “Why, do you know I set great store by that letter? I wouldn’t have lost it for a matter of five hundred pounds.”

Michael Sunlocks could bear no more. In an instant the weary look had gone from his face. His eyes flashed with anger; he straightened himself up, and brought his fist down on the table. “Come,” he cried, “let us have done with this fencing. You want me to pay you five hundred pounds. Is that it?”

“For the letter—that’s it,” said Jacob.

“And if I refuse to do so you mean to

publish it abroad that I have married a wicked woman ? ”

“ Aw, when did we say so ? ” said Jacob.

“ No matter what you say. You want five hundred pounds ? ”

“ For the letter.”

“ Answer. You want five hundred pounds ? ”

“ For the letter.”

“ Then you shall not have one sixpence. Do you think I would pay you for a thing like that ? Listen to me, I would give you all the wealth of the world, if I had it, never to have heard your evil news.”

“ That won’t pass, master,” said Jacob. “ It’s easy said now the letter’s gone, and no danger left. But five hundred pounds I’ll have or I’ll not leave Iceland till Iceland knows something more than she knows to-day.”

“ Say what you like, do what you like,” cried Michael Sunlocks ; “ but if ever you set foot in this house again, I’ll clap every man of you in jail for blackmailing.”

III.

Out again in the chilly dusky air, with the hard snow under foot, the Fairbrothers trudged along. Jacob gloomed as dark as any pitch, and Thurstan's red eyes, like fire of ice, probed him with a burning delight.

"I always said so," Asher whimpered; and then over Jacob's stooping shoulder he whispered, "I'll take half of what you offered me, and leave you to it."

Hearing that Thurstan laughed fiercely, and repeated his hot christenings of two days before—"Numskull! tomfool! blather-skite!" and yet choicer names beside. Jacob bore all and showed no rancour, but tramped along ahead of the others, crest-fallen, crushed, and dumb. And left to themselves for conversation and comfort, his brethren behind compared notes together.

"Strange! He doesn't seem to care what is thought of his wife," said John.

"Aw, what's disgrace to a craythur same as that? Like mother like son," said Ross.

"She had better have married the other one," said Asher, "and I always said so."

"It's self, self, self, with a man like yonder," said Stean.

"Curse him for a selfish brute," said John.

"Aw, an unfeeling monster," said Ross.

And with such heat of anger these generous souls relieved themselves on the name of Michael Sunlocks.

"Boys," said Thurstan, "maybe he has no feeling for the girl, but I'll go bail he has some for himself, and I wouldn't trust but he'd be feeling it mortal keen if he was after getting pulled down from his berth."

"What d'ye mean?" asked all four at once.

"Leave that to myself," said Thurstan, "and maybe since I set foot ashore I've heard tell of schames that's going."

IV.

Greeba sat in her room, trying to cheat time of its weary hours by virtue of much

questioning of her little English maid, who from time to time brought news of Michael Sunlocks. He had risen very early, as early as mid-morning (six o'clock), and ever since then he had been writing in his office. Oscar had been running here and there for him, first to the Senate, then to the Speaker's and then to the Bishop's. The tall doorkeeper, stammering Jón, had seen him, being sent for; and the feckless busy-body had told him ever such needless stories of the jellies and the soups and the mistress's visit to the poor man in the prison,—and however people got wind of things was just puzzling beyond words.

With such cackle and poor company Greeba passed her time, thinking no ill of the pert little maid who dressed up her hair and dressed down her pride as well, for a woman will have any confidante rather than none, and the sweetest and best of women, being estranged from her husband, her true stay and support, will lay hold of the very sorriest staff to lean on. And the strange twist of little natures, that made Oscar perky while his master

was melancholy, made the maid jubilant while her mistress wept. She was a dark-haired mite with eyes of the shallow brightness of burnished steel. Her name was Elizabeth. She meant no harm to any one.

Towards noon the little woman burst into the room with great eagerness, and cried, in a hushed whisper, "The Speaker has come. I am sure that something is going to happen; Oscar says so, too. What is it? What can it be?"

Greeba carried herself bravely while the maid was near, but when the door had closed upon the chatterer she leaned against the window and cried, hearing nothing but her own weeping and the grief of the half-frozen river that flowed beneath. Then, drying her eyes and summoning what remained of her pride, she left her own room to go to the room of her husband.

V.

In his little silk skullcap and spectacles the Speaker came back, and found Michael Sunlocks alone. At a glance he saw that

the trouble of the night before had deepened, and that something of great moment was afoot.

"Speaker," said Michael Sunlocks, "I wish you to summon both Chambers to meet at the Senate-House to-morrow night."

"It will be inconvenient," said the Speaker, "for the Committee of Althing has risen, and the members are preparing to go back home."

"That is why I wish them to be summoned at once," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Is the matter of such pressing importance?" asked the Speaker.

"It is; and it admits of no delay," answered Michael Sunlocks.

"May I mention its purport?" said the Speaker.

"Say only that the President has a message for Althing," said Michael Sunlocks.

"At what hour to-morrow night?" asked the Speaker.

"At mid-evening," answered Michael Sunlocks, and then with the sigh of a weary man, he turned towards the stove.

The Speaker glanced at him with his dim eyes screwed up, pushed back his little skullcap, and ran his forefinger along his bald crown, then shook his head gravely and left the room, saying within himself, "Why this haste? And why the message? Ah, these impetuous souls that rise so high and so fast sometimes go down headlong to the abyss!"

VI.

Michael Sunlocks was turning round from the stove when Greeba entered, and for all the womanly courage with which she tried to carry herself before him, he could see that she looked frightened, and that her eyes sought his eyes for mercy and cheer.

"Michael," she cried, "what is it that you are about to do? Tell me. I cannot bear this suspense any longer."

He made her no answer, but sat at his desk and lifted his pen. At that she stamped her foot and cried again—

"Tell me, tell me. I cannot, and I will not bear it."

But he knew, without lifting his head, that with all her brave challenge, and the sparkle of her defiant eyes, behind her dark lashes a great tear-drop lay somewhere veiled. So he showed no anger, and neither did he reply to her appeal, but made some show of going on with his writing.

And being now so far recovered from her first fear as to look upon his face with eyes that could see it, Greeba realised all that she had but partly guessed from the chatter of her maid, of the sad havoc the night had made with him. At that she could bear up no longer, for before her warm woman's feeling all her little stubborn spirit went down as with a flood, and she flung herself at his feet and cried, "Michael, forgive me; I don't know what I am saying."

But getting no answer to her passionate agony any more than to her hot disdain, her pride got the better of her again, and she tried to defend herself with many a simple plea, saying between a sob and a burst of wrath, that if she had deceived

him, and said what was barely true, it was only from thinking to defend his happiness.

“And why,” she cried, “why should I marry you while loving him?”

Then, for the first time, he raised his head and answered her—

“Because of your pride, Greeba—your fatal pride,” he said; “your pride that has been your bane since you were a child and you went to London and came back the prouder for your time there. I thought it was gone; but the old leaven works as potently as before, and rises up to choke me. I ought to have known it, Greeba, that your old lightness would lead you to some false dealing yet, and I have none but myself to blame.”

Now if he had said this with any heat of anger, or with any rush of tears, she would have known by the sure instinct of womanhood that he loved her still, and was only fighting against love in vain. Then she would have flung herself into his arms with a burst of joy and a cry of “My darling, you are mine, you are mine.” But instead of that he spoke the hard words

calmly, coldly, and without so much as a sigh, and by that she knew that the heart of his love had been killed within him, and now lay dead before her. So stung to the quick she said, "You mean that I deserted Jason because he was poor, and came here to you because you are rich. It is false—cruelly, basely false. You know it is false; or if you don't, you ought."

"I am far from rich, Greeba," he said, "although to your pride I may seem so, seeing that he whom you left for the sake of the poor glory of my place here was but a friendless sailor lad."

"I tell you it is false," she cried. "I could have loved my husband if he had never had a roof over his head. And yet you tell me that! You that should know me so well! How dare you?" she cried, and by the sudden impulse of her agony, with love struggling against anger, and fire and tears in her eyes together, she lifted up her hand and struck him on the breast.

That blow did more than any tearful plea to melt the icy mistrust that had all night been freezing up his heart, but before

he had time to reply Greeba was on her knees again, praying of him to forgive her, because she did not know what she was doing.

"But, Michael," she said again, "it isn't true. Indeed, indeed it is not, and it is very, very cruel. Yes, I am proud, very proud, but I am proudest of all of my husband. Proud of him, proud for him—proud that he should be the bravest and noblest gentleman in the world. That is the worst of my pride, Michael—that I want to be proud of him I love. But if that might not have been, and he had been the lowliest man on earth, I could have shared his lot though it had been never so poor and humble, so that I could have had him beside me always."

As he listened to her passionate words there was a fluttering at his throat. "Are you sure of that, Greeba?" he said.

"Only let me prove it to you," she cried, with the challenge of beauty in her beautiful eyes.

"So you shall, Greeba," he said, "for we leave this house to-morrow."

"What?" she cried, rising to her feet.

"Yes," he said, "from to-morrow our condition will be different. So get yourself ready to go away from here."

Then her courageous challenge sank away in an instant.

"What do you mean?" she cried, in great terror.

"If you have married the President you shall live with the man," he answered.

"Oh, Michael, Michael, what are you going to do?" she cried. "To degrade yourself?"

"Even so," he said calmly.

"Is that to punish me?" she cried. "To prove me? To test me?"

"If you can go through with it I shall be happy and content," he answered.

"Are you then to be nothing in Iceland?" she said.

"And what of that?" he asked. "Think of what you have just been saying."

"Then I have come into your life to wreck it," she cried. "Yes, I, I! Michael," she added more quietly, "I will go away. I would not bring shame and humiliation

upon you for all that the world can give. I will leave you."

"That you never shall," said Michael Sunlocks. "We are man and wife now, and as man and wife we shall live together."

"I tell you I will not stay," she cried.

"And I tell you," he replied, "that I am your husband, and you shall give me a wife's obedience."

"Michael, dear Michael," she said, "it is for your own good that I want to leave you, so that the great promise of your life may not be wasted. It is I who am breaking in upon it. And I am nothing. Let me go."

"It is too late, Greeba. As poor man and poor woman we must pass the rest of our life together."

At that she burst into sobs again, blaming her brothers, and telling of their mean mission, and how she resented it, and what revenge of wicked slander they had wreaked upon her.

"You see it is all an error," she cried; "a cruel, cruel error."

“No, Greeba, it is not all an error,” he answered. “It is not an error that you have deceived me—and lied to me.”

At that word her tears fell back, and the fire of her heart was in her eyes in an instant. “You say that, do you?” she cried. “Ah, then, perhaps there has been yet another error than you think of—the error of throwing him away for sake of you. He is noble, and simple, and true. His brave heart is above all suspicion. God pity him, and forgive me!”

Then for the first time that day since the six Fairbrothers had left the house, the calmness of Michael Sunlocks forsook him, and in a stern voice, with a look of fierce passion in his face, he cried, “Let me never, never meet that man.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FALL OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS.

WHEN the Fairbrothers, in the first days after their coming to Iceland, started inquiries touching the position and influence of Michael Sunlocks, thinking thereby to make sure of their birds in the bush before parting with their bird in the hand, they frequented a little drinking-shop in the Cheapstead where sailors of many nations congregated — Danes, Icelanders, Norwegians, English, and Irish. Hearing there what satisfied their expectations, their pride began to swell, and as often as Michael Sunlocks was named with honour they blew up their breasts like bantams and said he was their brother, so to speak, and had been brought up in the same house with them since he was a slip of a brat of two or three. And if any who heard them glanced them over with doubtful eyes they straightway broke

into facetious stories concerning the boyhood of Sunlocks, showing all their wondrous kindness to him as big brothers towards a little one.

Now these trifling events were of grave consequence to the fortunes of the Fairbrothers, and the fate of Michael Sunlocks, at two great moments. The first of the two was when Thurstan broke into open rebellion against Jacob. Then with a sense of his wise brother's pitiable blunderheadedness the astute Thurstan went off to the same drinking-shop to console himself with drink, and there he was addressed, when he was well and comfortably drunk, by a plausible person who spoke an unknown tongue. The end of that conference was nevertheless an idea firmly settled in Thurstan's mind that if he could not get money out of Michael Sunlocks, he could at least get satisfaction.

This was the matter that Thurstan darkly hinted at when Jacob, being utterly discomfited, had to leave all further schemes to his brethren. So that day he returned to his rendezvous, met the plausible person

again, and later in the evening sought out his brothers and said, "Didn't I tell ye to leave to me?"

"What's going doing?" said four voices at once.

"Plucking him down, the upstart, that's what's going doing," said Thurstan.

Then to five pairs of eager ears it slowly leaked out that a Danish ship lay in the harbour with a mysterious cargo of great casks, supposed to contain tallow; that after discharging their contents these casks were to be filled with sharks' oil; that waiting the time to fill them they were to be stored (as all other warehouses were full of bonders' stock) in the little cell of detention under the Senate-House; and, finally and most opportunely, that a council of Althing had been summoned on special business for the next night following, and that Michael Sunlocks was to be present.

The Fairbrothers heard all this with eyes that showed how well they understood it and keenly gloated over it. And late the same night the cargo of great casks was unshipped at the jetty, wheeled up to the

Senate-House and lodged there, carefully, silently, one by one, Thurstan helping, a few stragglers looking on, the stammering doorkeeper, long Jón, not anywhere visible, and no one else in the little sleepy town a whit the wiser. This being done, Thurstan went back to his lodging with the content of a soul at ease, saying to himself, "As I say, if we don't get anything else, we'll get satisfaction; and if we get what's promised I've a safe place to put it until the trouble's over and we can clear away, and that's the little crib under the turret of the Cathedral church."

Then the worthy man lay down to sleep.

Before Thurstan was awake next morning Reykjavík was all astir. It had become known that a special sitting of Althing had been summoned for that night, and because nothing was known much was said concerning the business afoot. People gathered in groups where the snow of the heavy drifts had been banked up at the street corners, and gossiped and guessed. Such little work as the great winter left to any man was

done in haste or not at all, that men might meet in the stores, the drinking shops, and on the Cheapstead and ask, "Why?" "Wherefore?" and "What does it mean?" That some event of great moment was pending seemed to be the common opinion everywhere, though what ground it rested on no one knew, for no one knew anything. Only on one point was the feeling more general, or nearer right: that the President himself was at the root and centre of whatever was coming.

Before nightfall this vague sentiment, which ever hovers like a dark cloud over a nation when a storm is near to breaking upon it, had filled every house in the capital, so that when the hour was come for the gathering of Althing the streets were thronged. Tow-headed children in goat-skin caps ran here and there, women stood at the doors of houses, young girls leaned out of windows in spite of the cold, sailors and fishermen with pipes between their lips and hands deep in their pockets lounged in grave silence outside the taverns, and old men stood under the open lamps by the

street corners and chewed and snuffed to keep themselves warm.

In the neighbourhood of the wooden Senate-House on the High Street the throng was densest, and such of the members as came afoot had to crush their ways to the door. All the space within that had been allotted to the public was filled as soon as stammering Jón opened the side door. When no more room was left the side door was closed again and locked, and it was afterwards remembered, when people had time to put their heads together, that long Jón was there and then seen to pass the key of this side door to one of the six English strangers who had lately come to the town. That stranger was Thurstan Fairbrother.

The time of waiting before the proceedings commenced was passed by those within the Senate-House in snuff-taking and sneezing and coughing, and a low buzz of conversation, full of solemn conjectures.

The members came in twos and threes, and every fresh comer was quizzed for a hint of the secret of the night. But grave

and silent, when taken together, with the gravity and solemnity of so many oxen, and some of the oxen's sullen stupidity, were the faces both of members and spectators. Yet among both were faces that told of amused unbelief; calculating spirits that seemed to say that all this excitement was a bubble and would presently burst like one; sapient souls who, when the world is dead, will believe in no judgment until they hear the last trump.

There were two parties in the Senate—the Church party, that wanted religion to be the basis of the reformed government, and the Levellers, who wished the distinctions of clergy and laity to be abolished so far as secular power could go. The Church party was led by Bishop John, who was a member of the higher chamber, the Council, by virtue of his office; the Levellers were led by the little man with piercing eyes and the square brush of iron-grey hair who had acted as Spokesman to the Court at the trial of Red Jason. As each of these arrived there was a faint commotion through the house.

Presently the Speaker came shuffling in, wiping his brow with his red handkerchief, and at the same moment the thud of a horse's hoofs on the hard snow outside, followed by a deep buzz as of many voices—not cheering nor yet groaning—told of the coming of the President.

Then amid suppressed excitement Michael Sunlocks entered the house, looking weary, pale, much older, and stooping slightly under his flaxen hair, as if conscious of the gaze of many eyes fixed steadfastly upon him.

After the Speaker had taken his chair, Michael Sunlocks rose in his place amid dead stillness.

“Sir, and gentlemen,” he said in a tense voice, speaking slowly, calmly, and well, “You are met here at my instance to receive a message of some gravity. It is scarcely more than half a year since it was declared and enacted by this present Council of Althing that the people of Iceland were and should be constituted, established, and confirmed a Republic or Free State, governed by the Supreme Authority of the Nation, the people's representatives. You were then

pleased to do me the honour of electing me to be your first President, and though I well knew that no man had less cause to put himself forward in the cause of his country than I, being the youngest among you, the least experienced, and by birth an Englishman, yet I undertook the place I am now in because I had taken a chief hand in pulling down the old order, and ought, therefore, to lend the best help I could towards putting up the new. Other reasons influenced me, such as the desire to keep the nation from falling amid many internal dissensions into extreme disorder and becoming open to the common enemy. I will not say that I had no personal motives, no private aims, no selfish ambitions in stepping in where your confidence opened the way, but you will bear me witness that in the employment to which the nation called me, though there may have been passion and mistakes, I have endeavoured to discharge the duty of an honest man."

There was a low murmur of assent, then a pause, then a hush, and then Michael Sunlocks continued—

“ But, gentlemen, I have come to see that I am not able for such a trust as the burden of this government, and I now beg to be dismissed of my charge.”

Then the silence was broken by many exclamations of surprise. They fell on the ear of Michael Sunlocks like the groundswell of a distant sea. His white face quivered, but his eye was bright and he did not flinch.

“ It is no doubt your concernment to know what events and what convictions have so suddenly influenced me, and I can only claim your indulgence in withholding that part of both that touches the interests of others. For myself, I can but say that I have made mistakes and lost self-confidence ; that being unable to manage my own affairs without grievous errors, I am unwilling to undertake the affairs of the nation ; that I am convinced I am unfit for the great place I hold ; that any name were fitter than mine for my post, any person fitter than I am for its work ; and I say this from my heart, God knows.”

He was listened to in silence but amid a tumult of unheard emotion, and as he went

on his voice, though still low, was so charged with suppressed feeling that it seemed in that dead stillness to rise to a cry.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “though this may come on you with surprise, do not think it has been lightly resolved upon, or that it is to me a little thing to renounce the honour with the burden of government. I will deal plainly and faithfully with you, and say that all my heart was in the work you gave me, and though I held my life in my hand, I was willing to adventure it in that high place where the judgment of Althing placed me. So if I beg of you to release me I sacrifice more by my resignation than you by your dismissal. If I had pride, Heaven has humbled it, and that is a righteous judgment of God. Young and once hopeful, I am withdrawing from all sight of hope. I am giving up my cherished ambitions and the chances of success. When I leave this place you will see me no more. I am to be as nothing henceforward, for the pole-star of my life is gone out. So not without feeling, not without pain, I ask you to dismiss me and let me go my ways.”

He sat down upon these words amid the stunned stupefaction of those who heard him, and when he had ceased to speak it seemed as if he were still speaking. Presently the people recovered their breath, and there was the harsh grating of feet and a murmur like a low sigh of wind.

Then rose the little man with the brush hair, the leader of the Levellers, and the chief opponent of Michael Sunlocks in the Presidency. His name was Grimmsson. Clearing his throat raspily, he began to speak in short, jerky sentences. This was indeed a surprise that moved the house to great astonishment. There was a suspicion of mock heroics about it that he, for his part, could not shake off, for they all knew the President for a dreamer of dreams. The President had said that it was within the concernment of Althing to know how it stood that he had so suddenly and surprisingly become convinced of his unfitness. Truly he was right there. Also the President had said that he had undertaken his post not so much out of hope of doing any good as out of a desire to prevent mischief

and evil. Yet what was he now doing? Running them headlong into confusion and disorder.

The leader of the Levellers sat down, and a dark-browed fellow from among his followers rose in his place. What did this hubbub mean? If the President had been crazy in his health they might have understood it; but the Lord was pleased to preserve him. Perhaps they had to look deeper. Whispers were abroad among some who had been near to the President's person that the time had come to settle the order and prosperity of Iceland on a new basis. He made no doubt such whispers implied a Protectorate, perhaps even a Monarchy. Did the President think to hasten the crisis that would lead to that change? Did he hope to alter the name of President for Protector, or for something yet higher? Was he throwing his sprat to catch a mackerel? Let them look to it.

The dark-browed man sat down, with a grin of triumph, and his place was taken by a pert little beardless person, with a smirk on his face. They had all read the

has pride been his bane? His humility has ever been his praise. He has been modest with the highest power and shown how little he valued those distances he was bound to keep up. When has mammon been his god? If he leaves us now he leaves us a poor man, as Althing may well assure itself. But let us pray that this may not come to pass. When he was elected to the employment he holds, being so young a man, many trembled—and I among them—for the nation that had intrusted its goods and its lives to his management, but now we know that only in his merit and virtue can it find its safety and repose. Let me not be prodigal of praise before his face, but honour and honesty require this, that we say that so true a man is not to be found this day in Iceland.”

The Bishop's words had quickened the pulse of the people, and cheer followed cheer again. “It is written,” continued the Bishop, “that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Our young President has this day sat down in the lowest room; and if he

must needs leave us, having his own reasons that are none of ours, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon him, and comfort him in all his adversities."

Then there was but one voice in that assembly, the voice of a loud Amen. And Michael Sunlocks had risen again with a white face and dim eyes, to return his thanks and say his last word before the vote for his release should be taken, when there was a sudden commotion, a sound of hurrying feet, a rush, a startled cry, and at the next moment a company of soldiers had entered the house from the cell below, and stood with drawn swords on the floor.

Before any one had recovered from his surprise one of the soldiers had spoken. "Gentlemen," he said, "the door is locked—you are prisoners of the King of Denmark."

"Betrayed!" shouted fifty voices at once, and then there was wild confusion.

"So this mysterious mummary is over at last," said the leader of the Levellers, rising up with rigid limbs, and a scared and whitened face. "Now we know why

we have all been brought here to-night. Betrayed indeed — and *there* stands the betrayer.”

So saying he pointed scornfully at Michael Sunlocks, who stood where he had risen, with the look of deep emotion hardly yet banished from his face by the look of bewilderment that followed it.

“False!” Michael Sunlocks cried. “It is false as hell.”

But in that quick instant the people looked at him with changed eyes, and received his words with a groan of rage that silenced him.

The same night Jorgen Jorgensen sailed up the firth, and landing at Reykjavík, took possession of it, and the second Republic of Iceland was at an end.

That night, too, when the Fairbrothers, headed by Thurstan, trudged through the streets on their way to Government House, looking to receive the reward that had been promised them, they were elbowed by a drunken company of the Danes who frequented the drinking-shops on the Cheapstead.

"Why, here are his brothers," shouted one of the roysterers, pointing at the Fair-brothers.

"His brothers! His brothers!" shouted twenty more.

Thurstan tried to protest and Jacob to fraternise, but all was useless. The brethren were attacked for the relation they had claimed with the traitor who had fallen, and thus the six worthy souls who had come to Iceland for gain and lost everything, and waited for revenge and only won suspicion, were driven off in peril of their necks, with a drunken mob at full cry behind them.

They took refuge in a coasting schooner setting sail for the eastern firths. Six days afterwards the schooner was caught in the ice at the mouth of Seydisfiord, imprisoned there four months out of reach of help from land or sea, and every soul aboard died miserably.

Short as had been the shrift of Red Jason, the shrift of Michael Sunlocks was yet shorter. On the order of Jorgen Jorgensen the "late usurper of the Government of Ice-

land " was sent for the term of his natural life to the Sulphur Mines that he had himself established as a penal settlement.

And such was the fall of Michael Sunlocks.

END OF THE BOOK OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS.

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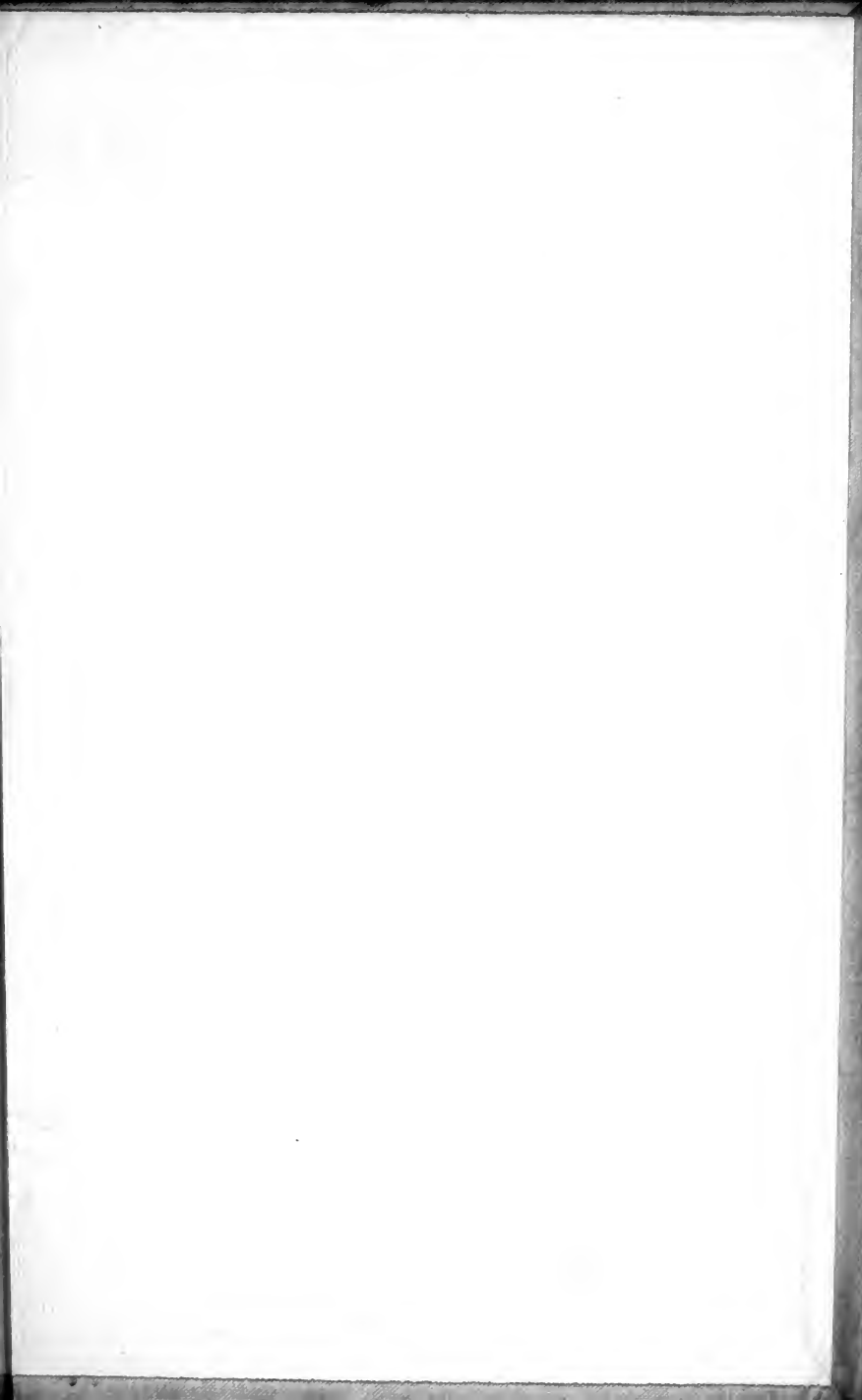
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